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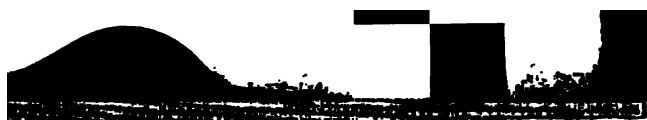
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**P I N M O N E Y ;**

**A NOVEL.**

**BY THE AUTHORESS OF**

**'THE MANNERS OF THE DAY,'—'MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS,'  
&c.**

---

Here's something to buy pins;—marriage is chargeable  
VENICE PRESERVED.

---

**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

**PHILADELPHIA:**

**E. L. CAREY & A. HART, CHESNUT STREET.**

**BOSTON:**

**ALLEN & TICKNOR.**

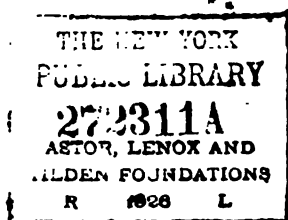
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## PREFACE.

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It has become so much the custom to connect every character introduced into a work of fiction with some living original, that the writer of *PIN MONEY* feels it necessary to declare its incidents and personages to be wholly imaginary. Exhibiting an attempt to transfer the familiar narrative of Miss Austin to a higher sphere of society, it is, in fact, a Novel of the simplest kind, addressed by a woman to readers of her own sex ;—by whom, as well as by the professional critics, its predecessor, “*THE MANNERS OF THE DAY*,” was received with too much indulgence not to encourage a further appeal to their favour.



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# P I N M O N E Y .

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## CHAPTER I.

When a couple are to be married, if their goods and chattels can be brought to unite, their sympathetic souls are ever ready to guarantee the treaty. The gentleman's mortgaged lawn becomes enamoured of the lady's marriageable grove; the match is struck up, and both parties are piously in love—according to act of Parliament.

GOLDSMITH.

"A most unexceptionable proposal, my dear sister!" said Lady Olivia Tadcaster to Lady Launceston, in the secrecy and private audience of her dressing-room. "Frederica is a lucky girl; and I recommend her to accept Sir Brooke Rawleigh with as little fuss or delay as possible. Let me see!—we are in the first week of June; Maradan, Kitching, and the Irish solicitors will manage to keep the matter drawing on for eight or ten weeks; and I shall not get off to Carlsbad before the end of August, unless my niece can make up her mind without further difficulty."

"You are always in such a hurry, Olivia! Sir Brooke only made his proposal last night, while we were waiting for the carriage to draw up at Almack's; and as I had no notion of what was going on, I kept begging Frederica to tie her boa closer, and keep her mouth shut, for fear of the east wind;—so that a definitive answer was out of the question."

"Well! and as soon as she reached home and informed you of what had passed, you wrote to Sir Brooke for an explanation of his intentions;—eh! my dear!"

"No, indeed; I am not so fond of business and explanations as you are."

"But you desired Frederica to take up her pen and ——"

"On the contrary, I begged she would take some arraroot and go to bed; for I assure you the wind was frightfully keen as we crossed the pavement in King-street. Since the new opening into St. James's-street, there have been more colds caught at Almack's than I can bear to think of. Well,—

please God ! I hope she will be happy. Frederica is a very amiable creature,—an excellent disposition,—only I never can prevail upon her to take proper care of herself."

"And Sir Brooke Rawleigh has a very pretty little estate in Warwickshire, of which I understand he takes *very* good care. It is just the sort of property a man likes to come into ;—he succeeds two old bachelor uncles, who never allowed an *axe* or a surveyor to come within reach of the premises. Old Sir Brooke considered the family timber as inviolable as the family diamonds."

"The young man is very well spoken of. His aunt, Mrs. Martha Derenzy, was saying the other day that there was not a finer young man in town ;—*so* steady, and *so* unlike the idle dashers of the day ! He will spend a quiet evening playing dummy whist with her, and then go home with his umbrella in the rain, with as much good-nature as if he had been doing the thing he liked best in the world."

"Umph !—rather creepsomely for a young man of eight-and-twenty ; I would sooner hear of him in the House, or making himself useful in his county. However, Frederica is not without spirit ; and I trust she will inspire him with a little more energy, or I shall disown her as my godchild. But now, my dear, about settlements. I conclude your errand with me is to consult about your terms with Sir Brooke ?"

"Terms !—surely I told you before, that Frederica acknowledges having always felt a preference for Rawleigh over the rest of her admirers ; and that I entertain no doubt she will accept him at once."

"Yes—yes ! I understand !—She will ask 'time to become better acquainted with him ;'—eat half-a-dozen dinners in his company ;—spoil a row or two of netting while he sits whispering nonsense and pulling her workbox to pieces ;—and finally vouchsafe to give that consent at the end of a fortnight, which she might bestow with quite as good a grace this very day. All those young-lady etiquettes are perfectly understood. But what do you mean to ask for her !"

"*Ask for her ?*" said the mystified Lady Launceston.

"Yes !—what does your man of business think you have a right to expect ?"

"Thank heaven, I *have* no man of business ; for yours, my dear sister, appears the plague of your life."

"Well then—yourself ; what provision shall you require for your daughter ?"

"Why you say Sir Brooke has a very pretty estate ; so Frederica will be tolerably well off."

"But I am speaking of her jointure—her pin money."

"Oh! I suppose Sir Brooke's lawyers will settle all that, while the carriage is building and the wedding clothes in hand."

"*Sir Brooke's lawyers!*" cried Lady Olivia, raising her eyes and hands in contemptuous compassion of her sister's ignorance of the world;—or at least of such of its legal and financial departments as formed the delight of her own existence. "My dear Sophia! upon an occasion like this, you really *must* exert yourself. Recollect you are the sole guardian of your daughter's interests. She has ten thousand pounds, which may prove extremely convenient to pay off mortgages, besides very fair expectations; and altogether you have a right to look for liberal overtures."

"Well, I *will* look for them, since you insist upon it," said Lady Launceston, gathering up her shawl for departure, and smiling at the solemn earnestness of her sister. "You know I have no head for business. Launceston always used to settle everything of that kind; and the utmost extent of my domestic management is limited to stretching my jointure so as just to cover our expenses; which, thank God, I have always been enabled to do."

"That is exactly the point to which I wished to bring you. What would you have done with your expenses, if *your* father and mother had thought and talked with as much levity on the subject of settlements as you do?"

"Oh! I suppose Lord Launceston made the necessary arrangements for me. I recollect we all signed something on a sheet of parchment the day before my marriage; but Gray was waiting in the other room with my jewel-box, which occupied my attention far more agreeably. Then, when I lost my poor husband, I was in too much affliction to inquire about settlements;—my son was very considerate in letting me know that I was to have two thousand a-year, and Frederica ten thousand pounds—an arrangement which, I conclude, was made in the will. Poor dear Launceston could not endure to see a woman worldly-wise; he never suffered me to talk to him about his pecuniary concerns; and used to say that a managing woman deserved to wear a beard by way of penance."

"Ay!—I have not forgotten his polite animadversions upon my chancery-suit with my father's executors; I know he hated to see me under his roof, because he saw *I* was not a person to be hoodwinked like some of my family. But even Lord Launceston, with all his arbitrary notions of female delicacy

and feminine nonentity, would not have wished to see his daughter defrauded of her just pretensions."

"I tell you what we will do," said Lady L., penetrated with a bright thought of escaping all the vexatious arithmetical combinations she saw impending over her. "Come back with me to Charles-street, and talk the matter over with Frederica;—you have a much better head for this sort of thing than I have. Do now—there's a good creature! It was sprinkling when I came in; but the pavement must be dry by this time, and with your clogs and a good warm shawl—or shall I send back the chair for you?"

"With the thermometer at 68°, I have very little apprehension of catching cold! But I expect a man with silks from Harding's at one;—at half-past, Mawe's people are coming to clean my alabaster vases;—at two, Ridgway's clerk will be here to see how many of the pamphlets I keep;—and from that time till three, I have appointments with my Worcestershire agent,—Professor Muddlewell, about the mining business in Flintshire,—General Popplestone, to whom I wish to refer for Frederick's commission,—Lady Ulster, about getting young Shakes into the Academy of Music;—besides two notes, which I must positively answer, relative to a negotiation for an introduction between Lady Barbara Dynley and the Duke of D——;—she is expiring to get to his parties."

"And *you*, I should imagine, my dear Olivia, of your labours!—Goodness! how *will* you get through all these perplexities?"

"You shall judge if you please; for at four I have ordered the carriage to go to Knight's, at Chelsea, with a beautiful new annual I have just received from my nephew Tadcaster, whom I fitted out last year for Swan River."

"I thought Knight, the bookseller, lived in Pall Mall?"

"And at five," resumed Lady Olivia, who seldom troubled herself to enlighten the crepuscular mind of her sister, "I will look in at Charles-street, and hear what arrangements have been talked of between Sir Brooke and Frederica."

At five, accordingly, Lady Olivia Tadcaster drove to the door; and during the ten minutes devoted on the hall-steps by this notable economist of time and space, to directing her footman by what short cuts and obliquities he must contrive to deliver seven cards, two notes, a parcel and a message, to turn to account the lapse of her family consultation,—Miss Rawdon was explaining to her lover the necessity for admitting and conciliating this fussiest of aunts; who would

otherwise beset their union with a thousand well-meant impediments. She concluded her preliminary counsels in time to receive Lady Olivia and her congratulations, with just the flushed, fluttering, hysterical tremor of perfect felicity, with which young ladies listen to the assurance that they are angels; and contemplate, for the first time, the career of human happiness and worldly prosperity arising from matrimonial importance.

In truth, poor Frederica's prospects, although irradiated at the age of twenty-one by the auspicious sunshine of "measureless content," had not been without their clouds and passing showers. It was now nearly a year since a visit to the county of Warwick introduced Sir Brooke Rawleigh to her notice, as the most charming of mankind; for a man is naturally twice as highly valued in his own county as in any other, or in London. He had passed a gay Christmas with her at her brother's seat at Marston Park;—had taken a daily ride with her—read with her—talked to her—smiled upon her—sighed for her,—done everything, in short, but tender himself and Rawleighford to her acceptance. After his departure, her brother incessantly rallied her upon his attachment, while her female cousins expressed their indignation at his desertion, in terms which frequently brought tears into Frederica's hazel eyes;—for, alas! it was known that Sir Brooke had quitted Marston only to venture upon a visit to a certain Lady Mapleberry—an active-spirited woman of her aunt Tadcaster's class, with six unmarried daughters;—one of those large, lively, good-humoured, singing, dancing, riding, chatting families, where a young man seeking a wife is apt to fall in love with the joint-stock merit and animation of the group; and to feel quite astonished on discovering, after his union with Harriet or Jane, how moderate a proportion he has received in his lawful sixth of the music, information, accomplishments, and good-humoured gossipry of the united tribe. Much to the astonishment, however, of the Jane, Harriet, Eliza, Margaret, Laura, and Anna, in question, Sir Brooke Rawleigh quitted Mapleberry quite as free in hand, and far more free in fancy, than he had found himself when his britschka glided through the lodge gates of Marston Park.

From the meeting of parliament in the ensuing spring, till the auspicious second Wednesday of the month of June,—poor Miss Rawdon was destined to undergo all the little fretful irritations of love and suspense. She had been invited to Devonshire House on the alternate Thursdays, with those



which extended his Grace's hospitality to Sir Brooke; and had been omitted altogether from Lady Mapleberry's never-ending still-beginning bread-and-butter dances. Sir Brooke, in defiance of her daily rides with her brother in Hyde-park, had mounted a new phaëton, and was never to be seen without the reins in his hand; and had appropriated to himself a stall at the Opera, from which, by no process of vertebral dislocation, could he catch a glimpse of Lady Launceston's box.—Nay! for two succeeding Almack's, he had danced two succeeding quadrilles and galoppes with Laura Mapleberry; and consequently, for two succeeding Thursdays Miss Rawdon had been destined to the martyrdom of a nervous headache; and Lady Launceston and the apothecary to the gratifying excitement of an indefinite and highly promising indisposition. But at length Frederica, after taking torrents of camphor-julep, took courage! Instead of following her irresolute admirer in his flirtations with burning eyes and a beating heart, she began to turn the former with some show of graciousness upon her brother's friend, Colonel Rhyse, of the Guards; and subdued the perturbation of the latter, till she could manufacture a smile for Sir Robert Morse and young Lord Putney, two of her frequent partners.

The charm was eminently successful. Sir Brooke grew agitated in his turn;—for a whole evening Laura Mapleberry sat unnoticed;—and by the end of a week, Frederica's headaches were convalescent,—for her hand was pledged to the man of her heart. Although an amiable, engaging, accomplished girl, Miss Rawdon had no preternatural pretensions to perfection. She was but a woman; and when she found herself warmly solicited by Sir Brooke for a promise that in accepting his proposals she would attempt at some future time to return his affection, did not think it necessary to magnify his triumph and depreciate herself and her sex, by a confession of having forestalled it by her own preference. Not a single word did she communicate touching her nervous indisposition and the camphor-julep!

They were just pausing at this degree of tender confidence, and Lady Launceston was smiling her maternal satisfaction upon them both, with no greater motive of inquietude for either than their position between the draughts of a closed window and a listed door, when Lady Olivia Tadcaster flustered her way into the drawing-room, with her lustring pelisse rustling at every step like a plantation of aspens. She soon despatched her satisfaction in “welcoming into her family the nephew of her estimable friends the late Sir

Brooke and Sir Robert Rawleigh;" glanced at "a valuable stratum of blue clay she had discovered on occasion of a visit to Rawleighford twenty years before,—and which, as she could not prevail on her host to regard it with sufficient attention, she would have willingly farmed upon her own account, more especially as there had been a talk at that time of carrying the Wardingsley canal within a stone's throw of the estate;"—grumbled over an extra turnpike she had discovered at Earl's-court in her morning's drive;—explained the mode of cultivation to be bestowed upon some New Zealand spinach she had purchased at Knight's, of which a plant would cover three quarters of an acre,—and of which Sir Brooke very judiciously begged an ounce, in order that he might reassure the horticultural misgivings of his future aunt, by making the experiment at Rawleighford;—and finally anchored herself upon the history of an arabesque handle, which Mawe's people had broken from her Aldobrandini vase, in their cleansifications. When she had proceeded as far in this episode as her purchase of the alabaster vessel at Florence, and its embarkation on board an English trading-vessel at Leghorn, Sir Brooke uttered a profound sigh, made a profound bow, muttered something about "business" in Lincoln's Inn, and took refuge in his phaeton; while Frederica bestowed a glance as nearly resembling an angry look as she was capable of assuming, on the aunt, who not only detained her from the furtive delight of peeping behind the damask draperies at Rawleigh's noble charioteership, but actually followed up his exit with an exclamation of—

"Well! I am glad he is gone at last;—now we can be a little comfortable!—Frederica, my dear child, I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Pray do not say them just now, if they require a thousand answers; for I have at least a thousand other things to think of."

"As you please," replied Lady Olivia, looking very much affronted; more particularly as she remembered her footman's multitudinous errands, and that—even making allowance for the short cuts—she could not possibly command the use of her carriage for the next half hour. "I trust I am not in the habit of intruding my advice; but I came here by my sister's desire to talk with you."

"My dearest aunt!—did you but know how much I have been talked to for the last three hours!"

"I conclude so, my dear!—I conclude so!" cried Lady Olivia, unable to preserve her ill-humour, when the prospect

of a little business to be managed presented itself to her hopes. "And now tell me all about it. *Has* Sir Brooke behaved handsomely!—What does he offer?"

"His hand and heart, or you would not see me so happy!" replied Miss Rawdon, rising and seating herself nearer to her mother, as she thought that she must shortly leave her glanced across her mind, and produced a momentary emotion.

"My dear Fred.!" said Lady Launceston, "do not hang over that Gardenia; you will get another of your nervous headaches."

Frederica obeyed with a smile; for she began to suspect that her disorder was radically cured; or that perhaps it might have found its way to Laura Mapleberry.

"And your settlements, child?" inquired Lady Olivia, despising them both with an air of stern disdain worthy of Catharine of Russia.

"Sir Brooke appears to dislike business as much as I do," said Lady Launceston, rolling the long silky ear of her lap-dog round her knitting-pin. "He said he begged to offer me *carte blanche*; which I suppose means that the lawyers will settle it amongst themselves."

"Did he—did Rawleigh offer you *carte blanche*?" exclaimed Lady Olivia, jerking together the clasp of her bag, in which she was searching for a memorandum or an old letter, which might prove more amusing than the yea-nay conversation of her sister and niece. "Well, my dear Sophia,—under such circumstances, you must decide everything without delay. With Fred.'s ten thousand pounds, I should certainly demand three thousand a-year jointure, and five hundred pin money."

"Ask for a jointure!—make a bargain with a prospect of Rawleigh's death!" exclaimed Miss Rawdon with indignation.

"Pray, my dear niece, do not affect to be so much more delicate and fastidious than the rest of the world; all women who marry in a respectable way, have a respectable jointure and pin money settled upon them; or they might perhaps at some future time become a burden to their own relations."

"No! not *all* women," said Lady Launceston, still busy with Chloe's ear—while her daughter had again recourse to the Gardenia to conceal a smile. "I, for one, never had any pin money. Launceston was very liberal, and chose that we should have a common purse."

"It must have been a very *uncommon* one, if it did not give you occasion to repent the bargain. A man who sets

out by telling his wife, 'as long as I have a shilling, sixpence of it is yours,' generally takes care never to have *more* than a shilling at his disposal. I have always observed that money paid in small sums appears a tremendous concession, compared with a specific allowance, paid quarterly by the banker or the steward."

"Which places one exactly on a level with the butler or the dairymaid!"

"No! Frederica; which places you on a level with women of your own rank in society. Do you suppose the Duchess of Middlesex, or Lady Rosebank, or any other person of fashion of your acquaintance, condescends to go blushing to her husband for a twenty pound note, if she wishes to perform some charitable action—or subscribe to some laudable institution—or pay Melnotte's bill?"

"But I trust Rawleigh and myself will perform our charities together; and I am not fond of seeing female names figuring in the lists of institutions. I shall leave that portion of our expenses to Sir Brooke."

"And Melnotte's account?—Shall you go barefoot in the punctiliousness of your delicacy; or—"

"No!" said Frederica, musingly. "I certainly should *not* like to trouble him with my personal expenses. It is unwise on the part of any woman to allow her husband to discover of what shreds and patches her sex is composed."

"Very true, my love!" observed Lady Launceston; "for when they do trouble themselves with such matters, they so strangely exaggerate all one's little follies and their own generosity! I recollect Launceston gave me a five hundred pound note when your brother was born; and for two whole years afterwards, whenever I presented him with a bill, or put my hand into his escrutoire, he used to exclaim, 'What, Sophy!—all that five hundred gone so soon!' though after all, it was only a year's allowance."

"Well then, dear mamma," said Frederica, "make what arrangements for me you think best; only pray do not let Rawleigh suppose I have any mercenary views in my marriage. Ask merely what is necessary for me. You have hitherto been so kind as to give me all I could desire, without suffering me to trouble myself with money or its value; and I was in hopes it might have been so still;—but I cannot expect any one else to be so considerate of me as my own dear mother."

Lady Launceston threw her arms round the neck of her child; while Lady Olivia placed herself at the table, and in

five minutes left upon the Russia blotting-book half a sheet of hieroglyphics, and an address to Messrs. Marwill and Makewill, New-square, Lincoln's Inn.

"There, Sophy," said she to her sister, with a glance of pity at the filial embrace, which she styled poor Frederica's heroics,—“I have already given you my advice,—I now give you my solicitor's direction. In pity to my journey to Calsbad, see him as quickly as you can; and do not give your daughter cause to reproach you hereafter with your inactivity in her behalf.”

And so deeply did her ladyship's counsels sink into the minds of her sister and niece, that within six weeks, as rigid an act of marriage settlement was signed in the drawing-room in Charles-street, as if Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh were about to marry chiefly in contemplation of a divorce; and to swear an eternal unity of mind, body, and estate, chiefly for the maintenance of separate interests and opposing rights.

## CHAPTER II.

No, I'll resign them, sweet! and anchor *here*—  
 Here in the holy quietude of home!—  
 The world is all contentions—jealousies—  
 Strifes urged by interest and foul enmity;  
 While on the waves of this calm lonely stream,  
 The halcyon broods unscared.—I'll anchor here!

TOBIN.

SIR BROOKE RAWLEIGH, the willing victim of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's cupidity, was in truth a very pleasing, well-looking, gentlemanly young man, calculated to pass through life with credit to himself, without splitting the trumpet of fame by the magnitude of his sayings or doings. But all that was wanting in brilliancy of talent was made up by sterling principles of honour and honesty; and his abilities were peculiarly adapted to the judicious management of a tolerably extensive landed estate, and to the steady maintenance of those collateral links which unite the proprietor to his county, and his county to the kingdom. His financial discernment might not have shone in Downing-street, or made a plausible figure on the treasury-bench; but it was sufficient to keep Mr. Ruggs, his steward, within reasonable bounds of speculation, and had more than once attracted the sapient reverence of his brethren of the petty sessions. His eloquence would scarcely have suspended the breath of five hundred startled senators, like one of Canning's electrical orations; or in a seven-hours' process of argument have kept their eyelids unsealed, like a discussion by Brougham. Nevertheless it made a very respectable stand at the after-dinner debates of the squirearchy of his neighbourhood; and his maiden speech at a county meeting, on the poor-laws, or the corn-laws, or the anti-slavery, or anti-knavery associations, or some of those cut-and-dried themes for full-grown gentlemen,—which, like huge stones upon a hill, are rolled upwards and downwards with succeeding vehicles without a chance of being crushed into the beaten track,—had found its way into the County Chronicle, well italicized with "*hear, hear*;" besides being

Robert, who was something of a hurry, wonders were by no means necessary if chief business in life would be the management of his wickshire estate. Instead, therefore, of a public school, to become a classical scholar—and to a crack college to become a member of the world,—he was educated at Rugby. He passed his vacations at his uncle's country house, under the vigilant superintendence of a neighbour, attaining his majority, and a very fine figure, his first appearance in town with notice for the fashionable clubs, and a coat made to order. In spite however of these demonstrations, he was soon discovered to be a very untampered young man; and in return for his services to society, condescended to sacrifice his independence to old-fashioned ways. After flirting seasons, yachting through as many summer months as same portion of winters between Paris and London, Rawleigh came to be regarded in the neighbourhood as a miracle of fashion,—a model when, at eight-and-twenty, an exact copy of his union with Frederica Rawdon, the opinion, with Lady Olivia Tadcaster, that the match was "a very advantageous addition to the neighbourhood."

There was only one individual in the alliance, who appeared at all inclined to the perlative superiority of Sir Brooke, or Frederica. The anticipations of the result were not faultless:—it was no person of the name of Robert Morse, no Lord Putney:—no one

London and Paris society, at no heavier expense than bad debts to the amount of a few dirty hundreds among his intimate friends,—the purchase of three lame horses,—and a damaged cabriolet,—he pronounced the Warwickshire baronet too prudent by half. He had himself been duped to a larger extent long before he left Eton; and when, on arriving in town for the signature of his sister's settlements, he accidentally learned from Lady Olivia (with whom he had become a great favourite by resigning into her hands the payment of a mortgage on his estate, and half-a-dozen troublesome annuities), that Rawleigh had rebelled against the article of pin money, and had even succeeded in reducing it from five to four hundred a-year, he began to vote him a very shabby dog, and to hope his little Fred. might not live to repent her choice.

"But, my dear Launceston," said his mother, who entertained a very high opinion of Sir Brooke, because he travelled in a comfortable, with magnesia lozenges in his dressing-case, and made it a rule never to sit in wet boots,—“I assure you that the diminution was made at Frederica's desire; and that Rawleigh objects to pin money upon principle.”

"Half the dirty things in this world are done 'upon principle!'—the word is a universal gag, to prevent people from exclaiming against meanness. I, for instance, am going to give up the Marston hounds this winter, because I find them too heavy a pull; and I mean to do it 'upon principle.'"

"And what principle can you possibly put forward, without unhandsomely compromising the memory of your father, by whom they were established?"

"Why, you see, it is my intention to marry next season,—"

"Indeed!"

"*Must*, my dear mother!—no other resource! involved beyond all redemption but an heiress. So I intend to feel persuaded (upon principle) that it would not suit the future Lady Launceston to have the bachelor's wing at Marston Park filled with riotous fellows, from October till March; or to begin her matrimonial reign by evacuating the territory, and dislodging her husband's chosen associates;—and thus, 'upon principle,' my whole hunting establishment is already on its road to Tattersall's; and I shall clear off an item of five thousand from my annual expenses, and save my principle and my principal at one and the same time."

"I rejoice to hear it!—I detest fox-hunting in all its branches," replied Lady Launceston, whose mind was any-



you may make as prudent a matrimonial arrangement as Frederica."

"I dare say I shall marry some poet or a popular actress,—or Lady Maple! I have made up my mind to an heiress a plan of my own in my life."

"I wish you would execute one of them and marry your cousin, Lady Mary T. clear ten thousand a-year."

"And twenty thousand French for garisms, to balance her rent-roll. N come to town early in the winter; get a lady's company, and bring you home a daughter with the dowry of a Persian princess, and a hackney-coachman."

But in the winter, the inconsistent aristocrat, driven from home by his resigning hounds, found himself very comfortably lodged at Leighford; having overcome his prejudicial qualities of his brother-in-law, a capable judge of a horse, and very willing to cover, provided the hounds met within the park, and Mr. Ruggs could be persuaded to join the master's society.

A strong proof that Sir Brooke Rawlinson was reserved in heart and hand as had been Olivia, and dreaded by her rattlepate relatives for the society of Frederica's warm hospitality not only to Lord Lisle, but such of his intimate friends as he chose to invite to Leighford. Aware that a long series of visits embarrassed the finances of his brother:

section of his marriage settlements, had made many more journeys to Gray's Inn than were good for the wheels of his phaeton, or for his credit with any member of the family,—excepting Lady Olivia Tadcaster. Frederica herself, although as indifferent respecting money matters as prosperity and ignorance of the world could render her, was somewhat dissatisfied that her lover should wish to dispense with the provision allotted for the maintenance of her personal expenses; and without conjecturing that Rawleigh's demur arose from a dread that the management of too large an income might rouse in his bride the latent love of business so offensive in her aunt, or the taste for profusion which had proved so fatal to the interests of her brother, she was tempted to suspect, at the united instigation of these two relatives, that the advice of Mrs. Martha Derenzy and Mr. Ruggs might possibly have infected her beloved Rawleigh with an over-solicitude for the things of this world.

In the unqualified happiness of her wedded life, however, Frederica's apprehensions soon wore away. She saw her husband respected by his tenants, his household, his family connexions; she saw that his establishment was arranged upon a liberal plan, and its hospitalities cordially extended to her brother, mother, and relations, even unto the uttermost cousin. The family diamonds had been re-set for her use, a handsome equipage appointed for her service;—and having chanced, during her bridal excursion among the Scottish lakes to express a fancy for a pony phaeton, she was greeted on her arrival at Rawleighford with the sight of a pair of greys, whose silken tails swept the ground like *pleureuse* feathers; and an accompanying garden-chair, whose fairy dimensions might have been suggested by the wand of Cinderella's godmother.

Under such cheering circumstances, the very name of pin money was forgotten. Among the wedding presents provided by the kind and thoughtful Lady Launceston for her daughter, was a purse of her own workmanship, containing one hundred bright new sovereigns;—and Frederica, amply supplied in her *trousseau* with every imaginable object of feminine luxury, and uninvited by the habits of her country life to frivolous expenses,—found little occasion to visit this maternal treasury; except from occasional motives of benevolence, towards persons whose equivocal reputation excluded their unequivocal wretchedness from the tender mercies of the Rawleighford kitchen, and the official patronage of Mr. Ruggs!

One morning, however,—one of those weary winters, when Sir Brooke was tempted away by her to try a new purchase with the hounds,—Lady Rawleigh devoted the time of their absence to a visit to a distaff-bour, long owed, and long talked of, chanced to be with all the vehemence of a woman's predilection for a white marble fountain in the form of a water-lily, its leaves, which graced the centre of Lady Lawford's flower-garden. During the solitude of her homeward journey she could dream of nothing but the enchanting effect a similar fountain would produce in an American garden. Rawleigh had lately projected for her in a rocky dell a park, and which was now nearly completed; and some recollection of his imputed economical turn disinclined him to propose this luxurious addition to its expenses, and he resolved to indulge herself in the purchase on her own.

"I will make myself a *cadeau* out of my *pin money*," said Frederica; as the monotony of a solitary journey rendered the regular rising of her postilions in their stirrups, caused her to close her eyes in the corner of one of Adams's somnolent barouches,—while she smiled at the sound of a word which had proved so unpalatable from the lips of her aunt. "Lady Lawford assures me that beautiful fountain cost her only seventy guineas; and as I never want any money, I cannot employ my allowance better than in the improvement of Rawleighford." As soon as she arrived at home the order was eagerly despatched to Lord Lawford's agent in Portland-road; and Frederica, by way of rendering the affair a pleasing surprise to her husband, was careful not to allude to the flower-garden at Elvington. She entertained not the slightest suspicion that Sir Brooke had already commissioned Lady Olivia to procure him from her a fountain at Florence, a far more beautiful fountain; with a view to effect the fairy retreat he had provided for his adored wife.

At length, in despite of the fox-hunters, and of the chilling of Mr. Ruggs, the warm breath of April came over the lawns of Rawleighford. The verdure and the flowers soon gave tokens of its influence; and, on the promise of returning summer, Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh set forward to take possession of the smoky, dingy, and venient house in Bruton-street, which six hundred pounds was to make their own for the season. The prospect once more settled near her mother, fortunately closed the eyes of Frederica against the discontents of her whole establishment. No sooner had they arrived in town, than a

flew to Charles-street, leaving the housekeeper to despond over the deficiency of blankets, stoves, and store-rooms; and the butler giving warning to Sir Brooke, that so damp a pantry was incompatible with the interests of his gout, and of the service of plate.

Lady Rawleigh was already prepared, by a letter from her mother, to find a stranger installed in her establishment;—a young person named Elbany, who had been well recommended to her as companion; for poor Lady Launceston, having no longer Frederica's music to cheer her dowager evenings, Frederica's bright eyes to thread her needles, and Frederica's sore throats to task her maternal anxieties, had begun to fancy herself most desolately lonely; and had finally been compelled to have recourse to the Morning Post advertisements of "A young lady of genteel connexions, unexpectedly reduced from affluence, &c. &c." Her daughter, indeed, was too affectionately disposed towards her to feel anything but satisfaction that she should have been enabled to domesticate under her roof a person so accomplished, so good-humoured, so companionable, and so meritorious, as this Miss Elbany was described to her by Lady Launceston. Still, Frederica could not help feeling that the curtsey dropped to her, and the glance bestowed upon her by "the companion" on quitting the drawing-room, were somewhat more familiar and inquisitorial than she had been prepared to expect from such a personage. The first impression was decidedly unfavourable to the young lady of genteel connexions.

Nor, in the course of her next morning's conversation with Lady Launceston, did her feelings soften towards this paragon of the toad-eating species. Lady Rawleigh had arrived in Charles-street, overflowing with such filial yearnings of heart as an only daughter might be supposed to feel after a separation of eight months—the first of her life—from her only parent; for in spite of Sir Brooke's invitations, her ladyship of Launceston had been far too apprehensive of damp beds, and inn-infections, to venture as far as Rawleighford. And now, when poor Frederica had so much to say of her new home,—her domestic arrangements,—her brother's reformation,—her pony phaeton, her harp, her flower-garden,—and all the innumerable instances of Rawleigh's kindness,—her narratives were nipped in the bud by the eagerness with which Lady Launceston proceeded to enlarge on the excellences of her new companion. Nay! once when Lady Rawleigh was describing to her mother how considerate an

... although I assure you she had :  
have made many people look serious  
sneezed four or five times running ; and  
hear of a basin of gruel when she went

" And Wrightson's gruel is so excellent  
Rawleigh,—angry with herself for her  
mother's foible. " However, my dear  
require so much of Miss Elbany's attendance  
come back. I shall be constantly her  
you must let me prepare your work, as  
formerly did ;—and our dear happy old  
again,—only that we shall now have a  
the family circle."

" Ah ! my dear Fred., you show your  
Miss Elbany will, *indeed*, be a cheerful  
circle. But do not talk of the good old  
again ; those days, child, are past for  
woman marries, it is written that she shall  
mother, and cleave to her husband ; and  
sit and cry in your dressing-room, my dear  
wedding-day, I felt that you were lost to  
would or could be with me again as in the

There were many things in this speech  
the ear of Lady Rawleigh. In the first place  
addition" had referred unequivocally to  
was by no means anxious to regard the  
ture in the domestic circle ;—and having  
of her own, to estrange her affections and  
new channel, she thought her mother at  
announcing their alienation. But she came  
and happy ; and was determined not to im-  
balance at the risk of vexing Lady Launces

interruption of Lady Launceston in announcing the distribution of Chloe's recent nursery of puppies, she was again moved almost to an irritable feeling, when her mother startled her in the midst of a description of the gray chintz-drawing-room opening into the conservatory at Raveleighford, with "You cannot imagine, Fred., how much Miss Elbany has improved the appearance of *your* old room, by moving the bed nearer to my dressing-room door, and placing the wardrobe next the window. It really looks quite a different place now; so much more light and cheerful. But then she always has things in such order!—You will find her, my dear, a very superior young woman."

Frederica took leave as speedily and affectionately as she could;—but in truth there was something in all this she did not like. It appeared to her that had her mother quitted for ever an habitual chamber in *her* house, she would have retained every object sacredly in its original position; nor permitted a stranger—an *hireling*—to pollute it by her habitation. She recollected how Lady Launceston used to creep into that room at night when *she* had retired to rest indisposed, especially with the memorable post-Almack's nervous headaches;—how often she had woken and found her mother sitting watching by her bedside; and she could not bear to think of "the companion" living in the same close and affectionate vicinage to Lady Launceston's apartment. She arrived in Bruton-street, and dressed for dinner, in anything but charity with Miss Elbany and her multifarious virtues and qualifications.

## CHAPTER III.

Petit monstre divin, lutin indéchiffable,  
Qu'il faudroit étouffer—si elle n'étoit adorable.

LA COQUETTE CORRIGÉE.

HAD it not been for the warmth of filial duty and affection which recalled her to her mother's neighbourhood, Frederica would have been well contented to pass the first spring of her married life at Rawleighford. At a distance from Almack's and the Opera, and all the poms and vanities of London life, her contempt for the mere frippery of society had been extremely philosophical. She listened to the nightingales at Rawleigh-glen, and cared not for Pasta; she sentimentalized over the setting sun upon her own Avon, and cared not for the brilliant ball-room at Devonshire House.

But "*l'appétit*," says the proverb, "*vient en mangeant*." After a morning's round of busy idleness—after having seen a case just arrived from Herbault unpacked in Maradan's ante-room, and perceived the contemptuous glance cast by Dévy on her last season's bonnet,—she began to experience a reviving interest in the minutæ of female existence. She felt that the finery of her *trousseau*, which had worn the newest gloss of novelty in Warwickshire, was obsolete in town; that her waist was too short, her dress too long, to appear with credit in a London ball-room;—and by the time she had paid her subscription at Eber's, purchased a few new canezons at Harding's, replenished her dressing-box at Delcroix's, and her writing-box at Houghton's, she found herself in that elation of spirits which a first morning passed in the hurry of the metropolis is apt to infuse into a person, whose head is bossed with the organ of acquisitiveness, and whose pocket is garnished with a well-filled purse. Her last errand was a morning visit to her friend Mrs. William Erskyne, whose career of fashionable girlhood had been contemporary with her own; and to whom she had officiated as bridesmaid a few months previously to her own marriage. Louisa Erskyne was a very popular little woman, with no greater sin upon her shoulders than a very empty head with a very pretty face;—keeping her husband and father in a

perpetual consternation of anxiety by her inconsiderate levities, but remaining a prodigious favourite with the world in general.

"My dearest—dearest Frederica!" exclaimed Mrs. Erskyne, throwing her arms round Lady Rawleigh, "how happy I am to have you here again. How do you like my new house and all my belongings!—For my part I am growing exceedingly disgusted with them! Ever since I paid a visit to Lady Axeter, in Belgrave-square, I have detested the sight of this old family mansion, with its square staircase and narrow door-ways; and I intend that Erskyne shall neither eat, drink, nor sleep,—or what he cares for more, neither hunt nor shoot,—till he has settled me in the Belgrave *quartier*, and let this ponderous old relic of the middle ages to some city knight. It would be the very house for a popular dentist, *où l'on fait antichambre*."

"It is well for you that Lady Drusilla Erskyne cannot rise from her grave and hear you utter such treason!"—

"And now tell me a little about Warwickshire;—are the people tolerably humanized!—How glad I am that Erskyne is not afflicted with a family-seat!—I should so abhor the sight of the avenue—the sound of the dinner-bell, and the rooks, and the still more atrocious cawing of the country neighbours!"—

"But we have neither avenue nor rooks at Rawleighford; and our neighbourhood is considered remarkably good."

"Spare me the definition of what is called a remarkably good neighbourhood;—I know it by heart. A fat D. D. rector, with two exemplary daughters in green veils; a Sir Marmaduke and Lady Domesday, with their park-paling white with age, like their own wigs, and covered with lichen like their own chins;—a new Lord Furbush, with a Nashional palace,—his plantations too young to furnish a birch broom, and his service of plate deeply pitted with the recent impressions of Goldsmith's Hall; a —"

"No, no, no!" cried Frederica, laughing. "Wrong from beginning to end!—Sir Brooke, the only baronet in the neighbourhood, dates from the Restoration: our neighbour, the Lord Lieutenant, is of Norman extraction, and derives his coronet from the field of Cressy; while our rector is a fashionable dean, his lordship's youngest brother!"

"Well, well!—I may have exaggerated the sins of your neighbourhood, but I have ocular demonstration, my dear, of your own. Are you not ashamed to show yourself in that quizzly pelisse?—fringed too!—my maid has thrown away



here these three months. I do not think I shall allow you, Fred., to pass another winter in Warwickshire, to get tanned, and shapeless, and unfashioned in this way. While you have been leading the life of a cauliflower, I have had such a delightful season at Brighton!—a succession of dinner-parties and balls—quite an echo of London. Do you know I have not passed a *tête-à-tête* evening with Erskyne, half a dozen times since we married:—after all, there is nothing so *very* tremendous in the dulness of domestic life!"

"We are rather *fond* of the seclusion of the country. I came up to town chiefly to see my mother."

"Yes, yes! people generally have a convenient dowager mother, or grandfather, whom they fly to town to visit when they grow tired of themselves and their country-seat. And now tell me, love, how do you mean to amuse yourself? What have you done—what are you going to do? As soon as you have made yourself fit to be seen, I conclude you will want to show your diamonds at Almack's! You must call on Lady J——, and write your name at Prince Leopold's, and the Duke's; and after you have been seen there, you will be asked everywhere.—What box are you to have at the Opera?"

"None," replied Frederica, blushing of as deep a *ponceau* as her ribbons; "Rawleigh is not particularly fond of music; and as he has had a great deal to do with furnishing his house this year, I have promised him to dispense with the indulgence."

"But *you* used to be so passionately fond of the Opera?"

"And am so still; but I should not like him to incur an expense which might be inconvenient."

"Nonsense, expense!—how I do detest these workhouse grumblings. Have you not seven or eight thousand a-year?"

"Which, as you must be aware, will only just serve to maintain our establishment, and bring us to town for the season."

"When I see Rawleigh I shall insist on his opening his purse-strings;—the first season is much too early a date for stinginess."

"Pray do not even mention the subject. I cannot bear him to think I have a wish ungratified."

"While I am only bent upon the actual gratification of mine. I had set my heart, Frederica, on your sharing my box: I like no female society half so much as yours; and what can that miserable hundred pounds signify to Rawleigh,

compared with the pleasure we shall have in being together!"

"A hundred pounds!—Is it only *one* hundred pounds!—Oh! then I can easily afford myself this little gratification out of my pin money. I have four hundred a-year, and have spent nothing at present."

"While I have five, and am over head and ears in debt!—Then I shall consider the matter settled, dearest Frederica; and you belong to me for the season.—May I expect you to-night?"

"On Saturday, if you please," said Lady Rawleigh, rising and taking her leave. "I will not disgrace you by my appearance, till I have in some measure humanized away my barbarous Warwickshire air."

This little affair had been arranged with so much haste and facility, that it never occurred to Frederica she could experience the slightest embarrassment in explaining it to her husband. Yet when she found herself actually seated opposite to Sir Brooke at dinner, listening to all the news he had heard at the Traveller's, and all the messages he had received for her from different friends in the Park, she began to premeditate her opening phrase for the discussion—a circumstance of rare occurrence with the frank and warmhearted Frederica. But her attention was soon diverted from herself and her opera-box, by the name of "Miss Elbany."

"I looked in at your mother's as I came home, Fred., to inquire whether she had any tidings of Launceston. You did not tell me what a beautiful girl she has got for a companion; positively I never saw a more superb creature."

"Those are exactly the terms in which you usually praise Launceston's bay hunter!—Miss Elbany is a fine showy vulgar-looking girl; but much too forward in her manners for her situation in life."

"*You* pretty little slight goddesses of beauty," said Sir Brooke, laughing, "are always inveterate against the ox-eyed Junos—such as Miss Elbany: but really, although both tall and fully-formed, your mother's young friend is neither coarse nor vulgar."

"Pray do not call her my mother's young friend;—I trust this paragon is not to be brought forward in *that* capacity.—I conclude her office in Charles-street is limited to winding silk for Lady Launceston—opening and shutting the wicket of Chloe's basket—and playing piquet when mamma is out of spirits."

"Very much like the sentence of condemnation passed upon

Squire Thornhill in the Vicar of Wakefield, as a punishment for running away with Miss Primrose!—But seriously, my dear Frederica, I never heard you speak or judge so ungenerously before."

Lady Rawleigh blushed over her wing of the chicken, for her conscience convicted her of all the meanness of jealousy;—not of the superior charms of this importunate Miss Elbany, but of the interest she had contrived to excite in the bosoms of all her nearest relatives. Never, in fact, had poor Frederica passed a more comfortless dinner! She had a circumstance weighing on her mind which she was reluctant to report to her husband; and she could forgive neither her mother's companion, nor her mother's daughter, for their rivalry in Lady Launceston's affections.

"I have promised to go to Lady Huntingfield's to-night," said she, in a somewhat peevish accent, as she sipped her coffee: "she is to have some very good music; and I ventured to answer for you."

"Did you?" said Sir Brooke, who had niced himself into one of Gillow's anodyne chairs, and was enjoying that species of chaotic mental vagary, in which country gentlemen, who devote six months of the twelve to the suppression of the fox, are dozily apt to indulge after a dinner of three courses. "I am sorry for that;—I hate dressing after dinner, just when one wants to be comfortable. And do you know I half promised we would drop in on your mother;—she has a bad cold—and said something about whist;—and *there*, you know, my boots will be admissible."

"I am sure some men look on the faculty of wearing dirty boots as one of the main indulgences of human existence!" murmured Frederica.

"I have been riding all the morning, or I should not have appeared at table with *you* in my boots," said Rawleigh, somewhat roused by this conjugal reflection; and exhibiting a pair of Hoby's faultless productions with their French varnish most blamelessly unspecked. And he hitched himself still more commodiously into his Morocco dormitory, doubly resolved not to go to Lady Huntingfield's.

"Mamma keeps such early hours when she is indisposed," resumed Frederica, sorry she had unnecessarily affronted her husband's boots, "that perhaps I had better order the carriage without further delay!"

"The carriage!—oh, no!—do let us walk; it is a beautiful night, and we can take the key and cross the square to Charles-street; unless, indeed," continued Sir Brooke, open-

ing his sleepy eyes, and fixing them good-humouredly upon his lovely wife, "you intend to crush poor Miss Elbany's pretensions at once, by appearing in full-dress?"

"Miss Elbany!—I had forgotten her very existence!—and I will be ready for you in a moment," said Lady Rawleigh, ringing for her maid and her shawl, that she might incur no further suspicions of coquetry by retiring to her dressing-room. And being speedily equipped in her Rawleighford garden attire, she looked so pretty, and reminded him so strongly of home, that Sir Brooke, in spite of her sarcasm on his negligence of dress, held her very closely and fondly upon his arm during their short journey to the residence of Lady Launceston.

The ears of the gentle Frederica, which had prepared themselves for the pianissimo tones exacted by her mother on occasion of colds or headaches, or such minor indispositions as could be permitted to take their course without the aid of a nightcap and Dr. Camomile, were something startled as she trod upon the muffling Axminster stair-carpet,—where the "blind mole" was rarely permitted to "hear a foot fall,"—by peals of vehement laughter proceeding from the drawing-room; and the words, "that horrid Miss Elbany!" were rising to her lips, when the announcement of "Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh, my lady!" whispered towards the mother's easy chair, produced a shout of "Ha! Rawleigh, my dear fellow—I'm glad to see you!" from her brother.

Lord Launceston, who was unceremoniously stretched at full length upon his mother's damask sofa, with boots far less guiltless of offence than those of Sir Brooke, having arrived unexpectedly in town to dinner, had found his spirit moved by the sight of Lucy Elbany's bright eyes, to exert himself far more for the amusement of his lady-mother, than he had ever done before in the course of his six-and-twenty years; and it appeared to Frederica that her visit to Charles-street, which was to cost her the sacrifice of Lady Huntingfield's concert, was anything but acceptable to the parties most concerned. She thought "the companion" made more fuss than was necessary in ringing for an addition to the tea-table, and in hoping Lady Rawleigh would not find the room too warm; while, in fact, poor Frederica was only hurt to find any person but her mother doing the honours of *that* room to her at all. It had been the scene of her own progress from childhood to maturity; of her affectionate attendance upon her parents; of the courtship and acceptance of her dear Rawleigh; and *there*—even *there*—sat the companion;—

hoping she did not feel the wind from the door, and inquiring whether she preferred black or green tea.—Officious creature!

But if her presidency at the tea-table was offensive, what could be said of her interference at the whist-table;—wheeling round Lady Launceston's chair, adjusting the candle-shades, sorting her cards, and counting her tricks! Frederica actually shrugged her shoulders with irritation!—for even Sir Brooke, usually so quiet and reserved in his address to strangers, took it into his head to utter the most extravagant compliments to Miss Elbany's graceful assiduities; while Lord Launceston made secret signs to her of somewhat contemptuous admiration of his mother's protégée, and of Rawleigh's undisguised admiration.

Surprised, vexed, and mortified, Lady Rawleigh lost rubber after rubber, to the indignation of her brother, and the triumph of her husband; and she was heartily glad when her mother's small covered basin of Dresden china made its appearance, with two taper sticks of dried toast; and when, at this accustomed signal, Chloe jumped up from her basket to yelp her vesper adieu to the butler, and give the signal for a general move.

"Now then!" thought she, as she found herself once more among the rustling lilac-bushes in Berkeley-square, "now, while he cannot observe my embarrassment, I will tell him the history of the opera-box.—I have been committing a little extravagance this morning," said she aloud, somewhat intimidated by the sound of her own voice.

"So I perceived by the silver paper parcels lying on your dressing-room table. I hope there is a handsome present for me in the collection?"

"Oh! something far worse than you dream of!—Those were little mother-of-pearl fopperies for my boudoir at Rawleighford; but my *crime* is one of far greater enormity than could be committed at Howell and James's."

"I do not believe it, Frederica, for two reasons; first, because you are too reasonable to be wantonly extravagant at any time;—and secondly, because I ventured to confide to you the necessity for a little prudence, to set us off clear in the world next year."

"But this weighty affair does not concern Mr. Ruggs and his financial budget; it is a private business relating to my pin money."

Frederica fancied she could detect a little start on the part of her companion at the word, as if it were displeasing to him.

"If it is a *private* business, my love, you need scarcely confide it to me."

"Oh! it is only private as far as regards the ways and means; it involves your person and consent quite as much as mine. I have engaged to take half Louisa Erskyne's opera-box; and I hope you will not refuse me the favour of accepting one of the tickets!"

Unfortunately they had just arrived at the interposing gate of the square; and Sir Brooke deliberately unlocked, swung open, and relocked it, and even crossed over to the pavement, before he attempted a reply. Frederica was apprehensive she should have to repeat the phrase she had found it so inconvenient and disagreeable to utter;—and when at length he commenced his answer, it was far more formal and unaffectionate than she was in the habit of receiving from his lips.

"I was not aware that I had ever refused any request of yours;—and when I proposed to you to forego the Opera for the present season, I acted, my dear, on your assurance that you had not the smallest inclination for a box, and that that you should find your private engagements quite a sufficient tie upon your time. I am sorry you deceived me; and still more sorry that the first use you make of your independence, will bring you in such close contact with a woman so notoriously giddy and misguided as Mrs. William Erskyne."

"I have no reason to think ill of my friend Louisa," said Lady Rawleigh, with her heart swelling under the first reproof she had ever received from her husband. "You always desire me to consult my own inclinations on such trivial occasions; and I conceived it must be a matter of indifference to you whether one hundred pounds of my allowance were paid to Ebers, or to Girardot.—However, since you disapprove this Opera scheme, I will write to Mrs. Erskyne, and persuade her to excuse me."

"By no means!—I would on no account have you provoke the attention of one of the most mischievous tongues in London to any difference of opinion existing between us. Nay!—to show you that I entertain no harsh feeling on the subject, I accept your proffered ticket; and will share with you an amusement which you rejected a fortnight ago,—as I then hoped—in compliment to me. And now let us discuss something else.—Did you ever see Launceston in such spirits?—He talks of passing the season in town,—asked me to look out for a pair of horses for him,—and wants you to make a water-party."

"And include Miss Elbany?"

"I should think you very unkind to omit her; and so handsome and agreeable a girl would make a charming addition. I am glad we took this house in Bruton-street," he continued knocking at his own door, "instead of the one Mrs. Dere wrote to us about in Cavendish-square. It will enable us to see a great deal of your mother; and really, Frederica, can *now* make up a very pleasant little family-party among ourselves."

"Again that odious Miss Elbany!" thought Frederica as she ran up stairs towards her dressing-room. And she closed her eyes that night, with a heart more resentfully disposed towards Sir Brooke, than she had ever known it since the days of Laura Mapleberry and the nervous headaches

## CHAPTER IV.

All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
 Degraded—wisdom in discourse with her  
 Loses discountenanced—and like folly shows.

MILTON.

THE following morning had been anticipated by Lady Rawleigh as one of considerable personal interest. She was to decide on the dress for her presentation; and Mrs. Erskyne had good-naturedly promised to come and assist her choice with all the discrimination of her feminine tact and experience. But Frederica felt so discomfited by the strong disapprobation expressed by Sir Brooke of her friend Louisa, that all her coquetry on the subject of her dress was chilled into indifference; and she would have been perfectly satisfied to make her appearance at St. James's in the train of rose-coloured brocade, in which Mrs. Martha Derenzy paid her devoirs to Queen Charlotte on occasion of the birth of the Bishop of Osnaburg; a substance boasting the consistency of a wainscot of moderate solidity.

At two o'clock, however, when the purple-edged band-boxes of Madame Girardot were deposited by Mademoiselle Estelle upon the sofas and tables of her dressing-room, and when—with closed doors and the gallery cleared—the blondes, and satins, and *moirés*, were exhibited to the admiration of Louisa, of her fair self, and of Mrs. Pasley her lady-in-waiting, the thermometer of Frederica's vanity rose even to fever heat; and she soon became as deeply involved in the comparative merits of jonquil and amber, as the renowned Mrs. Bellamy in those of her Statira costume! On finding from Mademoiselle Estelle that her former rival, Laura Mapleberry, was to be presented at the same drawing-room in her bridal capacity as Lady Lotus, she actually caused her jewel-box to be opened, that she might try the effect of her wheat-ears and diamond necklace upon the violet satin and *vert-bourgeon* velvet, between which her choice was undecided!

"But, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Erskyne, "surely you are aware that it is *de rigueur* for a bride to be presented in white?"

"But Lady Lotus is to make *her* appearance in the spotless



purity of white crape and pearls ; and as I have really no intention of contending with the dazzling insipidity of her flaxen locks and snowy apparel!"

"You think of crushing her in diamonds and imperial purple!—Quite right, my sweetest Frederica ; I am charmed to perceive that you assume a little spirit. You must have a flounce of that beautiful blonde to relieve your splendours, and you will be *grandiose comme une reine*!"

Lady Rawleigh was by no means satisfied that her dear friend was not quizzing her vanity ; but between hers, and Estelle's, and Mrs. Pasley's flatteries, and the tempting union afforded by the brilliants and the glistening satin as it was confronted with the sunshine by the expert hand of the *modiste*, she was prevailed on to select a dress at least thrice as splendid as she had originally intended.

"I own I am anxious that Rawleigh should be gratified by my appearance on such an occasion," thought Frederica, as she replaced the sparkling wheat-ears in Pasley's hands. "And as no one has any right to interfere with the distribution of my *pin money*, my pardonable extravagance will in this instance pass unreprieved."

"Heigh-day!—the doors locked?—what mysteries are on foot?" cried a loud voice in the corridor, while the handle of the dressing-room door was violently agitated. "My dear Frederica, I beg I may not intrude,—I would not disturb you for the world ;—but I *have* something *very* particular to say to you, and I met Sir Brooke in Bond street, who assured me that I should find you at home, and disengaged. Yes ! my dear,—I left a very interesting sale of marbles unfinished at Stanley's in order that I might not lose the opportunity of finding you alone."

"Not *alone*,—but always very happy to welcome you," said Lady Rawleigh, unlocking the door to admit Lady Olivia Tadeaster, whom she sincerely wished back again in the Rotterdam steam-packet.

"What have we here, my dear, what have we here?—You know I like to see pretty things!—Oh!—your court-dress ;—well, what have you chosen?—not violet I hope.—You will be taken for a bishop's wife, or daughter,—or grandmother, if you intend to bury yourself in that horrible flounce!" continued Lady Olivia, as Mademoiselle obligingly withdrew the rustling tissue-paper from the cases, to gratify the inquisition of a lady whom she eyed with some contempt, asking, as having "*bien l'air d'une commère-épicière*."

"Ah ! my dear Mrs. Erskyne, how do you do?—Sorry I

have not been able to leave a card at your door, but I only returned from the continent three days ago; and I have been all the morning at the Treasury, trying to get a private order to pass my baggage. I fancy I am as well known at Dover as the signal-post; I often tell Bermingham the Commissioner, he ought to give me a per-centage for helping him through his business.—My dear Frederica, you are keeping this young person waiting; do send her away with her rattletaps, for positively I cannot allow you to be imposed upon with the purchase of such obsolete splendours; you will look like a last year's number of the *Journal des Modes*.—Mademoiselle, these flowers are quite out of date;—I was with Herbault only last week, and—”

“*C'est possible, Miladi,*” said the little *modiste*, her eyes darting pins and needles at the intrusive advice of a woman in a hat like a custard-cup; “*mais cependant—*”

“*Cependant,*” said Lady Rawleigh, determined to maintain her independence, “I have *ordered* my dress; and I am satisfied Madame Girardot will give it an *air distingué*, however faulty may have been my own taste in the selection.”

“Girardot!—I cannot hear of your having your dress of Girardot!—Mrs. Pasley, have the goodness to show that young person down stairs; I wish for a little conversation with my niece. My dear Frederica! are you mad to throw away your money in this sort of frivolous manner? My carriage is waiting;—I have twenty minutes to spare; and I will take you to Sewell and Cross’s or Waterloo House, where we can inquire the price of white satin!—I dare say Mrs. Erskyne will come with us?”

“Thank you, Lady Olivia; I have no hope that my life will last long enough to waste any part of it in dancing attendance at the counter of a bargain-shop. Maradan and Triaud save me the degrading detail of knowing how many yards of tiffany and ribbon it requires to make me endurable. Farewell,—dearest Fred.—I shall see you to-morrow night at the Opera; and pray bring me word that you have committed no infidelities to Girardot and violet satin.”

“That is a very light-headed unprincipled little person!” said Lady Olivia, throwing herself upon the sofa, and crushing a bouquet of pink Cactus, left there advisedly by Mademoiselle Estelle. “I hope, my dear niece, you will not pass much of your time in her society;—I shall certainly give my advice to Sir Brooke upon *that* subject, the very first time we meet. Well,—Frederica, I have been sitting with your mo-

ther this morning; and my visit has made me *very* uneasy on her account."

"Indeed! is her cold increased?"

"Increased! how *could* it possibly increase? I drove down yesterday to the Strand, to the only shop in London where one is sure of getting genuine Welsh flannel, and bought two yards, which I wadded into a breastplate with my own hands.

—Did you ever see what I call one of my woollen cuirasses? —And then I went on to Newbury's in St. Paul's Church-yard, for some pectoral essence of Tussilago, and some colts-foot lozenges in case she should not like it in a fluid state;—so that, of course, I was not surprised this morning when I breakfasted with her to find her greatly relieved."

"Then what makes you anxious about mamma?"

"Her folly, my love,—her folly!—What madness can possibly put it into her head to settle a designing young creature like that odious Miss Elbany, in the house with my nephew?"

"But Launceston never lives in Charles-street; he is staying at the Clarendon."

"I can only assure you I found him quietly taking his chocolate in my sister's dressing-room this morning; with that Miss Elbany smiling and blushing at him like a crocodile."

"Artful creature! But, my dear aunt, you must be dreaming!—Launceston was never out of his room in London before twelve o'clock in his life. Nothing less important than a fox persuades him to overcome his natural indolence."

"And a greater fox than your mother's companion never put forth its attractions."

"I am quite of your opinion; my prejudices against that Miss Elbany require no aggravation. But what can we do? —To warn Launceston against the danger would perhaps insinuate a notion into his head, which might not otherwise find its way there."

"Oh! I see exactly how it will be!—My poor nephew, who is too indolent to go through the labour of making himself agreeable in the proper sphere, will be captivated by the cunning of a fine showy girl,—always at hand to amuse and flatter him;—and Marston Park will become the prey of a pack of needy adventurers."

"And poor William fall into hands unworthy to influence his fine ingenuous disposition!"

"Believe me I am much too well acquainted with his fine ingenuous disposition to think of opposing his evident admi-

ration for this vulgar creature,—who looks just like the heroine of a parody at the Porte St. Martin; for I know if he suspected a combination against him, he would run away with her to-morrow to prove his independence. But you must persuade Rawleigh to pass a great deal of his time in Charles-street, and be on the look out."

"I trust Sir Brooke *will* be frequently there, because my chief object in town is to attend upon mamma; but I certainly should never dream of taking the liberty to request my husband would act as a spy upon Launceston and—the Companion."

"Thank Heaven, I am not so scrupulous when the honour of the family is at stake!—I shall make it a point to carry this Miss Elbany about with me on all occasions;—I will take care she is seldom left in Charles-street, in my nephew's way;—and I know he would as soon find his way into my carriage as into an apothecary's shop. I make it a rule to keep unseized in the pockets to guard the lining against moths."

"But you cannot always be driving about," said Lady Rawleigh with an involuntary smile. "Besides my mother must not be left too much alone."

"Oh! no,—certainly not; but then I shall make it a rule to dine and pass the evening with my sister,—whenever I have nothing else to do."

"That is very kind of you."

"My dear Frederica, I never scruple to sacrifice my time to the interests of my family. To be sure, to-day I dine with Lady Quidley, who is shut up with a sprained ancle; to-morrow with old Mrs. Warde, for whom I have brought over a great lumbering *commode*, from Paris; on Thursday, with the Wermingtons, whose son made himself so very useful to me at Carlsbad; Friday a formal dinner in Piccadilly,—all the Tadcaster family to meet me at the Duke's on my return; Saturday I have promised to go down to Richmond, to show the lions at Hampton Court to a charming family of the ancient Bohemian noblesse, whom I met in the packet-boat on the Rhine: and on my return poor Lady Henry Vardon, the *divorcée*, pays me her annual visit. While *she* is with me, you know my dear, I become a dead letter; for I can neither receive visitors, nor take her to other people's houses,—who, *entre nous*, look upon her as an inadmissible impropriety; and so I generally occupy myself while she is with me in looking over and sorting my papers,—answering my letters,—verifying the inventories of my plate, linen, books,

and furniture;—and receiving the annual documents of my Shropshire estates.”

“Very amusing for poor Lady Henry!—But I suppose she finds it preferable to her solitary cottage at Bedford.”

“But I am idling away my morning here!” cried Lady Olivia, suddenly starting up, “and I have fifty appointments before dinner-time. Now do not make yourself uneasy my dear Fred., about what I told you respecting your brother; for though I have no doubt in my own mind that he will throw himself away upon this artful, sycophantic creature, there can be no reason for *you* to distress yourself on the subject. Good-bye, my love:—as I pass Compton House, I shall look in, and send you a few silks for your selection, for this unfortunate court-dress of yours;—something of a pale blue, or a topaz, would look very well with your complexion. Good bye, my dear;—don’t trouble yourself to ring the bell,—I shall find my servants in the hall; I never allow them to go down stairs in any one’s house except Archdeacon Drinkwater’s, where the golden rule is written, framed, and glazed, in the servants’ hall. I have got a little something for you, Frederica among my baggage, when I get it up from Dover; a trifle from Giroux, in the Rue du Coq, just to show you, my dear, that I thought of my dear niece when I was in the Splendid City. Well,—I shall certainly stop the carriage, and speak a word or two to Launceston if I happen to meet him;—but, for goodness’ sake, not a word of the little hint I have given you, if he should happen to call *here* this morning!”

“You may rely on me,” said Lady Rawleigh, as the receding murmurs of Lady Olivia Tadcaster’s *sostenuto*-accompaniment of twaddle, rose fainter and fainter up the well staircase from the hall; and right glad was she to perceive on looking from her dressing-room window in order to assure herself of the actual departure of the fidgeting aunt, that her own britschka was in waiting, to convey her from the united vexations of Miss Elbany—the court-dress—the opera-box—the indiscretions of Mrs. William Erskyne—and the officious interference of Lady Olivia.

## CHAPTER V.

A city dame,  
 Born to adorn with ample garniture  
 The pageants of the Guild—and melt away  
 Sir Frugal's ingots in the busy mart  
 Of west-world foppery,—the play, the ring,  
 The motely masque.

VANE'S HERACLEA.

LADY RAWLEIGH, who had insensibly subsided from the giddy animation of her early career of fashionable dissipation into the calm domesticity of a country life, persuaded herself during the perfect contentment of her existence at Rawleighford, that she had completely lost her taste for the glare of the ball-room—the stirring tones of the orchestra—the glittering of gaudy apparel. While loitering with Sir Brooke among the clay-trenches, and gravelly excavations, and burrowing of bog-earth,—forming the chaos which promised to assume the horticultural perfection of an American Eden some future summer,—she was tempted to exclaim, like Wolsey at the gates of Leicester Abbey—

Vain pomp and glory of the word—I hate ye !

But the heart of the country clodpole responds not more readily to the pipe and drum with which the cunning sergeant baits his recruiting-hook in the village market-place, than that of a woman born and educated in and for the great world, to the harmonious discords of clashing carriages, yelling link-boys, swearing coachmen, and reproving police-men. Seated beside her friend Louisa Erskyne in the unlucky opera-box, with the consciousness of Nardin's hand in the matchless distribution of her curls, and of Storr and Mortimer's supreme art in the arrangement of the emeralds, her mother's gift, which shed their pale reflections for the first time upon her cheeks,—she fancied that her vivid impression of self-satisfaction was solely derived from the pathetic tones of Malibran, the well-attuned precision of the sympho-

nies breathed in her ears, and the comprehensive c of a combination of "sweet sights, sweet sounds, a sentiments."

But it was not so!—Lady Rawleigh's animated in in the scene arose chiefly from the gratification of her vanity; combined with that buoyancy of temperament w is the result of youthful health and innocence of heart. would in fact have been quite satisfied with herself an around her, had not Mrs. Erskyne in a momentary *tête-* interlude of the successive coterie which had enlivened box, congratulated her at once on her good looks and fortune.

"You are *en bonheur* to night, Frederica, I never saw so pretty; and Lord Calder evidently visited us to for judgment of the *débutante*."

"What *débutante*?—Is there a new dancer?"

"Dancer!—absurd!—as if a man with a claim upo subscription of Chalk Farm would bury himself at the of a box like this, to decide on the merits of a dancer was *yourself*, my dear, on whom he was passing sente and by to-morrow night your fate and fashion will be de in all the clubs of St. James's-street."

"Lord Calder did not appear satisfied with his opport of observation," said Lady Rawleigh, smiling—but not approvingly—at the levity of her friend; "for he has g me a general invitation to his suppers."

"And shall you go to-night?" inquired Louisa in a of chagrin that the distinction had not been extende herself.

"To-night I have promised to go to Mrs. Luttrell's who lives somewhere at the antipodes,—in the Regt park."

"On Saturday, then?"

"Oh, no—certainly not;—we never keep late hou Saturday night, on account of their influence on the ord our establishment on Sunday morning."

"What a prim little Mrs. Goodchild it is!" cried Lo with an ironical laugh. "But next Tuesday—surely will go to Calder House on Tuesday?"

"Most likely not.—Rawleigh knows very little of Calder; and I am not anxious to entangle myself in his I am too vain, and perhaps too proud, to like the society man of *his* description."

"What description?—your vanity must be ravenou deed to be dissatisfied with Calder's evident admiration

"But my pride would shrink from all the adulation and *petits soins* requisite with a man of his supremacy, to maintain a place in his good opinion. A sensualist of a certain age, endowed with the gift of a princely fortune to further his inclinations, delights to grace his circle with all the young and pretty women of society; just as Lord Stafford achieves the acquisition of a new work of art, or you and I, Louisa, adorn our drawing-rooms with rose-trees."

"A very laudable instance of good taste."

"In my opinion nothing can be so humiliating as the exactions of such a coterie. A younger man would consider his gallantry taxed to make himself doubly agreeable, lest he should be eclipsed by the splendours which surround him; whereas at Lord Calder's—"

"We are all expected to be at *his* feet. Very true; and the obligation *de faire sa cour* to anything but royalty is a degradation not to be endured by a woman who finds herself an object of adoration elsewhere."

"And of respect in her own happy home," added Lady Rawleigh, in a lower voice,—as if dreading the raillery of her companion.

"The eagerness which all Lord Calder's set display in their rivalry for his notice certainly *does* provoke me at times; and, after all, I am very glad he has never invited me to his suppers."

"After all? Why had you ever an inclination to belong to that clique?"

"Oh! dear, no;—I love my liberty and myself far too well!—But it does look odd, you know, to live so much in the same set, and never be invited to his parties; which, let the host be what he may, are certainly the best to be had for love—or fashion."

Mrs. Erskyne did not think it necessary to enlarge on this vexatious topic; or to inform Frederica that she had heard in confidence from the dear friend of a dear friend, of a very dear friend of his Lordship, that she had been unanimously blackballed on a proposal for her admittance into the coterie at Calder House; on the grounds of

That sarcastic levity of tongue,

which never fails to create bitterness and misunderstandings, among a set of idle people devoted to scandal and tittle-tattle, but morbidly sensitive whenever the slightest whisper appears to reflect upon themselves.



"Mrs. Erskyne is a pretty piquante little creature," had been Lord Calder's sentence of exclusion; "but too *tracassière* to be permitted to ruffle the smooth surface of society with which I am desirous of surrounding myself. Even summe lightning—pretty and playful as it is—is formed by the reflection of some distant storm."

Sir Brooke now made his appearance in the box, accompanied by a tall, thin, eager-looking man; whom he named to Lady Rawleigh as his friend Mr. Lexley, and to whom Mrs. Erskyne extended a bow of abhorrent recognition. In truth, she was rejoiced that none of her own fashionable and fastidious dangles happened to be present, to be driven away by the approach of a bore pre-eminently and universally recognized, such as Mr. Lexley;—a man so flustered with hurry, that he always appeared to have left his mind behind him; and whose unconnected discourse, and uncollected features, seemed to have been dispersed by the arduous perplexity of business weighing on his responsibility: while, in fact, the only business he had ever transacted in his life, was to sit session after session, upon a hard bench; and say, "Ay" or "No," in the name of one of the most inactive and long suffering boroughs in his majesty's dominions!

"Malibran has been delightful this evening," observed Frederica, anxious to bestow a gracious reception upon a person qualified by Sir Brooke as his "friend;"—however ragged his locks, and uncouth his mode of retaining possession of a full-grown morning hat, bearing visible tokens of Strand manufacture.

"Indeed!—I am glad to hear it. I have only been here a few minutes, and was detained in passing through the room by Lord Warspite;—a little Admiralty business to be talked over."

"Every one dines so late now," resumed Lady Rawleigh "that gentlemen have very little chance of hearing anything of the Opera, unless a few determined amateurs who come for the *premier coup d'archet*."

"Dine!" exclaimed Mr. Lexley, horrified that any person could believe *him* guilty of the sin of a late dinner, during the sitting of parliament; "I wish I could flatter myself as being so agreeably detained from any engagement for some time to come!—I don't suppose I have passed two hours at table for the last two months!"

"A very harassing session," observed Sir Brooke, sympathizingly.

Mr. Lexley shook his head with a contracted eyebrow, an

a desponding lip; while he thumbed his great heavy hat with the industry of a kneader of pottery ware.

"Anything doing to-night in the house?"

"Nothing very important;—the last reading of the salt-water canal bill,—all smooth sailing, or you would not have seen me here. I left Lumber on his legs, and Trap had thrown in a few of his keen discouraging sentences."

"Like so many drops of vitriolic acid," observed Mrs. Erskyne, without diverting her gaze from the ballet.

"And of course Sir Bumble Drone, and the other county member, must go through their short generalizing answers. All *that* will last till a quarter before twelve, when the whale-fishery business comes on;—and I must be back at one for the division, or I shall get into disgrace and the minority," said Mr. Lexley with a grim smile, and an elevation of his camelopardic throat, intended to imply the proud consciousness of independence.

"I wonder you venture to be out of the way," said Mrs. Erskyne gravely. "Even on questions where it is not your intention to speak, I have no doubt you are incessantly bored by reference for precedents. Erskyne tells me that no one could get on without you;—now this whale fishery!—I dare say, if the truth was known, Mr. Lexley, *you* were in the secret of that article on the subject in the Quarterly? Surely, surely, you ought not to be out of the way when it is before the house?"

"Oh! I have still twenty-five minutes at my disposal," said Lexley, taking out a watch of the shape and dimensions of a mortar; "even allowing five, to go round by Arlington-street and pick up my friend Phaganhurst, whom no one can get away from his claret but myself;—we shall want his vote to-night. In the meantime, I have just got a word or two to say to Lord Wilchester, about the Helvoetsluys beacon business, of which he has given notice for Thursday ae'nnight; I fancy he is somewhere in the house."

"You will find him in his stall behind the double bass," said Mrs. Erskyne, eager to get rid of their visitor on any terms. "His bald head is as prominent a feature as that of the new palace."

"Thank you, my dear Mrs. Erskyne—thank you! I never venture among the stalls. If you hazard a word in a tone louder than the pianissimo of Nicholson's flute, every member—that is every dilettante—turns fiercely round, as if you were out of order."

"Do you intend to stay out the ballet?" inquired Sir

Brooke, disgusted by the want of courtesy displayed to Mrs. Erskyne to his friend. "If you think of going to Mr. Luttrell's, had I not better inquire for the carriage?"

"Pray do," replied Frederica, as Louisa turned to welcome the entrance of Sir Robert Morse, the mutual first of their young-lady days, "or rather let us go at once."

"Well, my dear Fred.!" exclaimed Rawleigh, drawing up the window of the chariot, while—after a fierce contention with a wrangling mob of coachmen, and a confused phalanx of carriages, they worked their way through Regent-street in the direction of the Regent's park,—“how glad I am to find myself once more alone with you; I have something to say."

"Nothing about Launceston, I hope?"

"No!—nor about Miss Elbany,—in spite of Lady Olivia's agonies!"

"She has confided her apprehensions to you, then?"

"Actually stopped her carriage opposite to Boodle's this morning, and sent in her footman to desire I would come and speak to her. There I sat closeted with her for a quarter of an hour, listening to her predictions of a marriage between your brother and your mother's companion, in an atmosphere resembling that of Savory and Moore's shop; and with the certainty of being quizzed to death on my return to the club touching this family consultation. But enough of Lady Olivia—my business is of a more important nature. Do you know, Frederica, that, with Lexley's assistance, I have just now a most favourable opportunity of getting into parliament."

"But is it worth while to go through all the trouble and expense, with a general election so near at hand?"

"The trouble will consist in passing a couple of hours at the Blue Lion or Black Boar at Martwich; and the expense will of course be commensurate with the diminished value of the seat. Still it is an expense; and my only demerit on the subject arises from a disinclination to appropriate a considerable sum to the indulgence of my own selfish predilections, after urging economy in our general establishment."

"My dearest Rawleigh!—you talk as if I did not participate in your personal pleasures and distinctions;—as if I had separate interests."

"And so we have!" answered Sir Brooke, between jest and earnest, but affectionately pressing her hand; "remember the pin money and the opera-box, Frederica. However

I shall write down to Ruggs to-morrow, for the surveyor's report on the timber of the Oxley estate. Indeed I am pretty sure I can raise the necessary sum without much inconvenience; provided I can persuade you to make the sacrifice of the new conservatory, and to forgive me if I occasionally bring forward the subject of economy in our domestic arrangements."

"You can have *very* little confidence in me to make my concurrence a matter of doubt," said Lady Rawleigh, gratified by an opportunity of marking her eager sympathy in her husband's interests; "I will become as prudent as Mrs. Martha Derenzy, emulate her lectures on the advantage of ready-money and discount; and you shall reward me with five *franks* a-day. But what has that tiresome Mr. Lexley to do with the business?"

"I hope you do not allow yourself to be infected by all the silly prejudices and antipathies of your friend Mrs. Erskyne? Lexley is not a lady's man, I acknowledge; but he is a very useful and active member of society."

"Of society!—he appears to me to forget that he is anything but a member of—parliament."

"Perhaps he may be a *little* too fond of fetching and carrying, in the petty business of the House; but notwithstanding his foible, he is a very estimable man,—with very clean hands, and a very sound heart."

"Very dirty gloves, and a very intrusive hat! But how is he to assist you in this borough affair?"

"Why he happens to be just the sort of man people are apt to refer to in the agency of this species of confidential traffic. He has a friend with a seat to dispose of, just now, under circumstances highly advantageous to me; and I have promised to dine with him to-morrow, and settle the business."

They were now in the string of carriages leading to Mrs. Luttrell's *fête*, and within view of those elaborate festive preparations, with which persons of moderate means, moderate mansions, and an acquaintance of the moderate class, affect to rival the hospitalities of the Duke of Devonshire or Lady Londonderry. The front of a tolerably proportioned house overlooking the Regent's-park, was converted by the temporary aid of floor-cloth and tarpaulin, into a conservatory smelling more of Downing's manufactory than of roses and jessamine; while stars of ill-trimmed variegated lamps, flaring and smoking, added their unlucky odours to the malaria of the spot. The hall of Mrs. Luttrell's abode was metamor-

phosed by a screen of withering laurel-branches into a rural retreat; in which some eight or ten footmen,—with the glaring liveries of the family, hanging voluminously upon the shoulders of half the gang, and betraying them as hirlings for the occasion,—exerted the utmost fury of their lungs to announce the entering guests. It would have been difficult to decide which was the preponderating discord in the house of feasting;—the yells of a band of ill-bred servants,—or the twang of an orchestra, of which the musicians appeared to measure their own merit by the volume of sound they could severally produce.

At the door of the ball-room stood the curtsying and overheated Mrs. Luttrell; charmed to behold the extent of the mob she had collected to stare at her diamond tiara, and arrayed in a silver tissue robe, studded all over with bouquets of foil, which compelled this most brilliant of hostesses to standing position. She took care to be engaged in eager conversation when the announcement of "Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh," met her ear, in order that her vulgar butler might think it necessary to indulge in a stentorian repetition of the gratifying sound for the edification of the company near the door. Poor Mrs. Luttrell, being strictly confined within the limits of mediocratic society, conceived that a ladyship of an sort was good for something; and had already made up her mind that, since her distant relative had been so aspiring to unite himself with the daughter of a Viscountess, the name of the Honourable Lady Rawleigh should grace her Morning Post advertisement on the morrow,—in company with "Messrs. Rosin's incomparable band, and Messrs. Gunter's delicacies of the season."

Escaping as quickly as they could from the courtesies of a lady who "'oped they had got up to the door without much difficulty," the Rawleighs manœuvred their way round the skirts of a quadrille, which shook the very foundations of the house by its saltatory exertions, into the second drawing-room; where Frederica, by the aid of certain old-fashioned diamond-aigrettes with which she had been intimately acquainted for the last five years, contrived to recognise several ancient matrons and untireable chaperons—Lady Launceston's former contemporaries at the card-table.

But what was her amazement on perceiving in the midst of one of these grisly groups, her giddy brother!—listening without much show of impatience to the obsequious discourse of a fat middle-aged woman, arrayed in a turban which might have served the Pacha Abomelique in a representation of

Blue Beard, at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham!—Lord Launceston started with surprise, but speedily rose and joined his sister and her husband.

"What on earth are you doing here?" whispered Frederica.

"Business, Fred., business!—You see I have a better excuse than yourself; for I should hardly think *you* would plead either business or pleasure as *your* inducement."

"Hush! Mrs. Luttrell is a distant connexion of Rawleigh's."

"Is that a reason for suffocating yourself with the vapours of lavender-water, huile antique, and hired argands?"

"Have *you* any better motive for your devotion to yonder fair Odalisque?"

"*That* is my future mother-in-law," said Lord Launceston calmly. "You know I have long been in search of an heiress; and these people, who are soap-boilers or some such thing, were so obliging as to fall in love with me at Cowes last summer, and save me all further trouble."

"My dear Launceston, you do not really mean that you have serious thoughts of allying yourself with that horrible woman!"

"I never had serious thoughts of any thing in my life; except once when I was going to be flogged at Eton, and had some notion of caning the Doctor by way of preventive. But Mrs Waddlestone has very serious thoughts of allying herself with *me*. Would you like to see my bride elect?"

"Certainly not *as* your bride-elect," replied Lady Rawleigh; turning with a look of anxious inquiry towards the quadrille, and fixing her eyes upon a juvenile mummy forming a most afflicting miniature of the lady in the turban.

"Quite wrong, Fred!—You have not the least touch of animal magnetism in your composition, or you would have found out your future sister at first sight," said Lord Launceston; smiling, and nodding with an air of good understanding to a fairer and more graceful sylph than ever graced the aristocratic boards of Willis's:—dancing with the gentle tranquillity of Madame Michau's choicest scholar, and dressed with a perfection of elegance which neither the fastidious Louisa Erskyne, nor the still more fastidious Mademoiselle Estelle could have taxed with an error of taste.

"Is not Leonora charming?" said Lord Launceston with an ironical smile.

"Charming, indeed!—but no Leonora *Waddlestone* I am

persuaded. She must have been changed in her cradle by fairy or an Irish nurse."

"The strawberry ripest grows beneath the nettle!"

theatrically mouthed her brother. "You fine ladies, w fancy there lies no salvation without the pale of Almack know very little of the superiority of beauty and accomplishment to be met with in the secondary set of London society. Fortunately for me, my beggary brought me among the soap-boilers, and brewers, and other nonentities; and I shall consequently bless myself with the *prettiest* as well as the richest wife in the peerage."

"But in sober sadness, I hope you entertain no thoughts forming this *mésalliance*?" said Lady Rawleigh, and she began to think that even the companion—(if an orphan) might have been preferable to a Leonora Waddlestone with such a mother.

"No treason against my Leonora!" said Launceston gravely.

"But against your mother-in-law?"

"What possible fault can you find with her? That crimson satin robe was part of the spoil of Tippoo Saib's wardrobe—she told me so herself; and only look at her pearls!

'Each pendant in her ear shall be a province.'

"Frightful creature!"

"If you utter one injurious sentence respecting her, I will instantly present her to you;—a punishment I assure you some severity—for she will take particular care neither to forget or be forgotten by you."

"She certainly appeared very satisfactorily engrossed in her conversation with *you* when I entered the room."

"I flatter myself she already loves me like a son; and I am certain that she loves me like a lord,—which is a degree far greater warmth in Mrs. Waddlestone's estimation."

"Dearest Launceston!—I am beginning to shudder when you pronounce that detestable name!"

"Leonora will lose it you know in becoming your sister. I have been dancing with her all the evening, and have resigned my place to your old friend Colonel Rhyse, that may enjoy a little of Mrs. Waddlestone's conversation."

"Again!—*Waddlestone!*—The sound an echo to its sense."

"Launceston!" said Sir Brooke, who had been detained from their dialogue by the civilities of Mr. Luttrell, a respectable gentleman with very large calves and a powdered head, whom strangers usually mistook for the butler, "it is a rare thing to meet you in a ball-room. Will you make my excuses to Lady Launceston, my dear fellow, and tell her she must be satisfied with Frederica alone to-morrow; for I am obliged to dine with Lexley on particular business."

"I should think you would dine with the brute on no other motive. However, I will take care of my sister;—there will be a large party in Charles-street to introduce Miss Elbany to all the family."

"I really think mamma is bewitched by that girl," cried Lady Rawleigh.

"Who is not?" replied her brother, with something very much resembling a sigh.

"You had better invite your favourite, Mrs. Waddlestone, to join the circle," said Frederica, peevishly.

"Certainly, if you wish it," observed Lord Launceston, gravely; and he moved eagerly towards the Lady with the pearl pendants, who fanned herself in joyful agitation on his approach.

But Frederica, apprehensive that her giddy brother might really execute his threat of introducing her to his very uninviting friend, now whispered to Rawleigh her anxiety to leave the room. Compassionating her affected fatigue, Sir Brooke extricated her from the crowd; and after standing for a moment in the evergreen hall,—at the door of a supper-room glittering with caramel baskets and pyramids of foil, and savouring horribly of ham sandwiches and negus—Lady Rawleigh's carriage "stopped the way." She arrived in Bruton-street only half recovered from the shock of her astonishment and consternation.



## CHAPTER VI.

A stately palace built of squared brick  
 Which cunningly was without mortar laid,  
 Whose walls were high, but nothing strong or thick,  
 And golden foil all over them displayed,  
 That purest sky with brightness they dismayed.  
 High lifted up were many lofty towers  
 And goodly galleries far over laid;  
 Full of fair windows and delightful bowers.

SPENSER.

THE following morning was devoted by Lady Rawleigh, according to a previous engagement, to a humdrum drive in the suburbs with Mrs. Martha Derenzy, her husband's favourite aunt; when for two long hours she found herself condemned to listen to the rheumatic old lady's diffuse details of the domestic arrangements of her neighbours, a Mrs. Scott, a Miss Hunter, and a Mr. Wilson, persons who belonged of a sufficiently unpretending degree of life to be within reach of the attractions of her tea-table; and whom Frederica very sincerely wished had superseded her in the pleasures of the present airing. Her thoughts were naturally engrossed by the approaching introduction of a "Miss Waddlestone" into the house of Rawdon!—at one moment, she resolved to exert her most anxious efforts for the prevention of such a catastrophe; at another, the interesting figure of Leonora recurred to her recollection; forcing her to admit that not a single young person of her own rank in society—Not even the heiress, her cousin Lady Mary Trevelyan, the object of her former speculations for her brother—rivalled the pretensions of the soap-boiler's lovely daughter.

She could not but reflect with some amusement on the needless pains which poor Lady Olivia Tadcaster had been giving herself, to intercept any possibility of a *little-thing* between Lucy Elbany and Lord Launceston; for although the companion had very judiciously declined the favour of accompanying her ladyship in her morning's tour of the bargain-shops, she had not been able to elude the vigilance with which the sister of her patroness thought proper to establish

herself daily in Charles-street, during the hour devoted to Lady Launceston's siesta, a crisis generally selected by the young lord for his visits of filial duty. Frederica was even cogitating over the necessity of acquainting her aunt with her brother's actual matrimonial views and engagements, when Mrs. Derenzy, suddenly pulling the check-string opposite the entrance-lodge of an immense house at Kensington Gore, put a period to her meditations.

A porter, covered with lace and aiguillettes, having answered the summons, Mrs. Derenzy tendered her visiting card, with the imprudent additional message of "Her compliments—and she was sorry she could not get out, as she had a lady with her in the carriage." Away they drove again; and Lady Rawleigh had not even the curiosity to inquire to whom the house belonged and the message was addressed; when in a few minutes the carriage stopped suddenly.

"What is the matter," cried the old lady in a fidget of alarm. "Anything wrong with the harness?" And she let down the window in a prodigious flutter, when a panting footman in a gorgeous livery, similar to that of the porter aforesaid, made his appearance sans hat, sans breath, sans manners;—"Mrs. Waddlestone's best respects, ma'am, and she hopes you'll turn back, and 'll be very happy to see the lady."

"What *shall* we do, my dear Lady Rawleigh?"

"Waddlestone!" faltered Frederica; "the soap-boiler?"

"I fancy Mr. W. is in some kind of business in the city; but their style of living at the west end is quite superior. I assure you nothing can equal the beauty of their gardens; and if it would not be asking too great a favour of you, my dear niece, I should really be glad of an opportunity to visit them this fine morning."

"By all means, then, let us turn back; but as a favour in return, pray, dear Madam, let me exact a promise of you not to *name* me to the family; I have motives for the request which I will explain hereafter."

"Certainly—certainly;—but what can I call you?"

"Your niece;—which will fully satisfy the curiosity of Mrs. Waddlestone, touching a person in a shabby bonnet and last year's pelisse."

In fact Lady Rawleigh rather congratulated herself on the opportunity of inspecting the domestic habits of a family, with which she was so soon likely to be connected; and when, on approaching the mansion, she perceived its long

vista of conservatories, the marble stands of exotics the lawn, and the swarm of domestics congregated hall-door, she was willing to admit that if affluence was sole subject of her brother's matrimonial choice, decidedly fortunate in having passed the preceding at Cowes.

"Remember!" she whispered emphatically to Mrenzy, in assisting her up the vast flight of steps.

"I give you my word of honour not to mention your answered the old lady, conceiving that this whimsey part of her nephew's noble bride must originate in pride.

"Under any circumstances?" persisted Frederica.

"Under any circumstances!" echoed Mrs. Derenz ing a glance upon the great Buhl clock which g pedestal of *giallo-antico* in the hall, in the hope that lu time—the hour of paté de Périgord, and pine-app Waddlestone House—was not far distant.

Even Frederica, accustomed as she was to the dv of the great, felt startled by the profusion and sele the objects of *virtù* which met her eye on every side staircase was modelled after one of Gandy's superl tectural designs;—and the vestibule through whi passed into the drawing-room, was ornamented by fin of the Whetter and Dying Gladiator, and by an origi ana with a greyhound, from the classical chisel of Sch The soap-boiler was evidently a patron of the fine art

The saloon into which they were now ushered, wa those luxurious retreats, which modern refinement c to decorate with all the triumphs of human genius, the useful inventions of human industry. Opening conservatory in which tropical plants threw up their leaves into a dome where the slender threads of a j produced a succession of rainbows, overarching bl bright and evanescent as their own hues, it was load all those inviting means of repose, afforded by cu ottomans and chairs at every angle of inclination su by the fancy of indolence. Jardinières bright with were intermingled with triangular perambulators fill the last new works of the day; and although five j only graced the walls, covered with velvet hangings o fawn colour,—they were five *chef d'œuvres* from the h Claude, Hobbima, Ruysdael, Salvator Rosa, and Va such as the intellectual eye delights to rest upon wit increasing partiality, till they become familiar and p

in its estimation as the faces of those it loves. On one side of the saloon stood a magnificent organ and harp, surrounded by a scattered profusion of music; and near the fireplace a cabinet of exquisite miniatures, which might have been adjudged as the works of Isaac Oliver or Petitot, had not a half-finished performance of similar merit appeared on a little ebony bureau beneath; accompanied by a palette and brushes and the various implements of a fairer artist.

Frederica was startled from an examination of this beautiful collection, by the vociferous entrance of Mrs. Waddlestone; and she had just time to drop the thick Chantilly veil over her face, and hear herself casually announced by Mrs. Martha, as "My niece, from Warwickshire." She had not been deceived in anticipating that the Waddlestones would resolve a nameless niece, in a dress of Quaker-like simplicity, into a *poor relation*,—a species of unsalaried Lucy Elbany; and she was consequently permitted to seat herself at a very satisfactory distance from her hostess, and to listen unmolested to the dialogue with her humdrum relative.

"La!—Mrs. Derenzy, my dear Madam! how *could* you hesitate about bringing your own niece to Waddlestone House! Pray be assured I shall always feel particularly gratified in seeing any of your family, *chez moi*."

"You are extremely polite, Ma'am;—I am sorry that the state of my health does not more frequently permit me to make inquiries after yours and Miss Waddlestone's."

"Thank you, my dear Madam,—thank you; Leonora is as well as the dissipation of the season will allow;—torn to pieces, Mrs. Derenzy, torn to pieces with the pleasing toils of the *grand monde*.—Ah! here she comes,—poor dear;—quite languid with the *fête* of last night; I assure you it was *le point de jour* before we reached Waddlestone House."

Leonora, dressed in the utmost simplicity of morning dress, now made her appearance from the conservatory; and after a graceful recognition of her mother's elderly guest, seated herself in a much more courteous vicinity to the anonymous niece, than Mrs. Waddlestone considered due either to her degree or her pelisse. Already she had entered into a desultory conversation with the stranger, touching the state of the weather and its influence upon her flowers; when the attention of both ladies was arrested by the sound of Lord Launceston's name uttered by Mrs. Waddlestone; and neither of them found it possible to maintain their separate dialogue, while so interesting a topic was discussed within their hearing.

"Yes, Ma'am!—a more charming entertainment I think I never beheld. Mrs. Luttrell is a sweet woman;—she has diamonds enough to form a moderate-sized chandelier, and I must say she does them ample justice;—one seldom sees her without them, except at church."

"She is a distant connexion of mine," said Mrs. Martha, eagerly; "but her hours and habits are too fashionable for me,—I do not see much of her."

"Yes! she is quite one of the *beau monde*;—excellent company at her house!—We had Lady Williams, and Lady Thomas, and Lady Smith, and Lady Wilson,—and a vast number of people of fashion. We took our *protégé*, young Launceston, with us; for I really can't abide that Leonora should dance with indiscriminate partners."

"Lord Launceston?" inquired Mrs. Derenzy.

"Oh! his lordship is quite *l'enfant de la famille* at Waddlestone House," said the soap-boiler's lady, looking towards her daughter with her mouth drawn on one side by way of innuendo. "We had Launceston's sister there too,—that little Lady Rawleigh;—but I must own I didn't think much of her; and as to Sir Brooke, he has more the air of an apprentice than of a man of fashion."

"My dear mamma," interrupted Leonora, distressed by her mother's superfluous sarcasms, "surely it is impossible to be more elegant in address or appearance than Lady Rawleigh!"

"I don't know what you call an elegant dress," observed Mrs. Waddlestone; "but I got as near her as possible, and if hers was not Urling's net, I am very much mistaken."

"She is so graceful and ladylike that I own I did not notice her dress," said Leonora.

"Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh are my very near relatives!" cried Mrs. Martha Derenzy, gasping with consternation, but not knowing how to terminate the ill-timed comments of her hostess.

"I am sure, Mrs. Derenzy, my dear Madam, I ask your pardon;—but when one hears people so cried up as Launceston is always crying up this sister of his, it does incline one to be a little severe."

"Brothers are partial judges," said the old lady, fidgetting on her seat with alarm.

"But Colonel Rhyse is not brother to Lady Rawleigh," observed Leonora; "and he has often assured me she is a model of feminine gentleness."

"Oh! Colonel Rhyse makes it a point of conscience to

swear to the truth of all Launceston's rhapsodies. However, I dare say we shall have ample means of judging,—I dare say we shall have plenty of Lady Rawleigh's company before we die,—eh! Leonora?"—And again she distorted her mouth by a significant screw.

Leonora, pretending not to hear this coarse apostrophe, which in fact served to colour her face and throat with the deepest crimson, now turned towards her silent companion with some trivial observation respecting her drive; when Frederica, feeling that she was practising a somewhat unfair deception by making herself the auditress of Mrs. Waddlestone's notes explanatory, inquired whether it would be taking too great a liberty to beg to accompany her through the celebrated gardens of Waddlestone House. Leonora, ever eager to give pleasure to others, and particularly anxious to divert the attention of the stranger from her mother's satires, instantly rose; and followed by Lady Rawleigh, moved towards the conservatory. But Mrs. Waddlestone, who had heard the petition, and considered it somewhat encroaching on the part of Mrs. Derenzy's humble companion, called out after her daughter—"Now pray, my dearest Leo., don't go to overheat yourself! Put up your parasol, and put on your bonnet; for you know Launceston and his friend may drop in from minute to minute, and his lordship can't abide to see you scorching your eyes out by a *coup de soleil*."

Leonora promised compliance with these maternal injunctions; and in another minute Frederica found herself alone with her future sister-in-law, in one of the prettiest flower-gardens which ever put forth its roses since those of Armida. She was delighted to perceive that the youthful heiress pointed out to her observation every plant and every rarity really deserving her attention, without the least parade or affectation; and as Leonora stood with her slight figure and silken curls, leaning against a marble vase, in the shadowy coolness of a trelliced walk covered with flowering acacias, Lady Rawleigh was so captivated by her beauty, and so disposed in her favour by the defence she had uttered of her own, that she was half-tempted to claim her at once as a sister. Fortunately, the reminiscence of Mrs. Waddlestone was still sufficiently strong upon her mind, to restrain her within the bounds of prudence.

"I could not have conceived," said Frederica, "that so secluded a spot existed within a morning's drive of Bond street."—

"Except from the visits of our London friends," replied Miss Waddlestone, "it forms quite a lonely country-house. I am very much attached to this place. I often think that small as this garden is, I could be content to limit my future existence within its walls."

"That notion," thought Lady Rawleigh, "must certainly have originated from her tête-à-tête walks with Launceston in this very *berceau*!—But Mrs. Waddlestone has been telling us wonders of the dissipated life you lead," said she aloud. "Surely you would not wish to resign the pleasures of your London season?"

"I would not renounce the society of my intimate friends; but I cannot say the attractions of our general acquaintance would often seduce me from my own happy home. You know," said Leonora, blushing deeply, and shaking away the curls from her deep blue eyes with a smile of proud humility, "we are but *parvenus*; a fact which *here* I can easily forget; but which is incessantly recalled to me in a London ball-room, either by the want of refinement of our equals, or by the contemptuous bearing of our superiors. That very Lady Rawleigh, of whom we were speaking just now, rushed from Mrs. Luttrell's party, last night, only to avoid an introduction to us;—a fact which I mention to excuse the asperity with which she was mentioned by mamma—who has by nature the most indulgent disposition in the world. I should be sorry that a stranger judged either herself or the object of her strictures, from a few hasty words uttered in a moment of vexation."

"Believe me, I should not take the liberty"—Frederica began.

"Do not let us say another word on an unpleasant subject," said Leonora, rallying her spirits, which were evidently in a minor key, "while we have these beautiful Camellias to look at. This delicate flower is the 'Lady Hume's blush;'—what a pity that anything so lovely should be scentless!"

But Lady Rawleigh, in momentary apprehension of her brother's arrival and of the annoying explanation which must ensue, hurried through the lofty green-houses glowing with blossoms, on pretext of Mrs. Derenzy's impatience; and arrived in the drawing-room at the same moment with a tray, covered with a greater variety of fruit than any place but Ragly Castle, or Owen's shop could possibly rival. She had now the nervous perplexity of seeing her aunt attack a conical bunch of superb Frontignan grapes, which nothing short of ten minutes could possibly suffice to demolish; and

very earnestly did she long to take justice, and Mrs. Waddlestone's scissors of embossed gold into her own hands, and curtail the enjoyments of poor Mrs. Martha Derenzy. Dreading every moment to hear the doors thrown open, and her brother announced, she attempted to beguile the time by noticing the pictures decorating the apartment.

"They are indeed matchless," said Leonora, without any affectation of humility. "My father is considered an excellent judge of pictures; and in purchases, has the advantage of being advised by the most eminent artists of the day, many of whom are constant visitors here. We have very little to do with men of fashion, or men of rank; but my dear father is highly esteemed by men of genius of all conditions."

It was fortunate for Miss Waddlestone that her mother was uttering her parting civilities to Mrs. Derenzy when Leonora gave utterance to so plebeian a declaration; and she now bestowed a valedictory curtsy of most contemptuous brevity on the nameless and well-veiled niece who hastily followed her guest from the saloon. Just as their carriage passed the lodge, Frederica perceived her brother and Colonel Rhyse leisurely approaching; but the unknown chariot of Mrs. Martha Derenzy was of far too gothic a build to attract their attention; and the remaining way from Kensington Gore to Bruton-street, was enlivened only by the old lady's exclamations concerning the coarse ill-nature of Mrs. Waddlestone—the excellence of her grapes—the beauty of her daughter—and above all by her own regrets that Frederica should have exposed herself to a predicament so disagreeable.

"I see your motive, my dear ma'am; I can understand your desire to form your unembarrassed observations upon a family with whom you may possibly become more closely united; but I know not whether most to lament the annoyance to which you have been exposed, or the unequal alliance projected by my Lord Launceston."

Lady Rawleigh, however, entertained no doubt as to the comparative magnitude of the two evils; and she dressed herself for the dinner in Charles-street, without having found time to communicate half her distresses to Sir Brooke, or make up her mind as to the extent of the intelligence due to her mother and aunt. Launceston, in his well-appointed but unostentatious bachelor equipage, having called for her before the ceremonies of the toilet were fully concluded, she desired he would proceed and send his carriage back for her, to avoid the inquiries of a tête-à-tête; and when his blood-horses a second time skirted within a hair's-breadth the iron-railings



of Berkeley-square towards their destination, she could but contrast their rate of speed with her morning's jog with Mrs. Martha; and even with the sober pace at which Sir Brooke, with his heavy Rawleighford-bred bays proceeding towards Westminster and the Lexley collection.

"And now," said Frederica, as she stopped at her mother's door, "now for the forward officiousness of Miss Lucy!—Little does she suspect how thoroughly all her plans are thrown away upon my brother; or how differently he estimates the modest simplicity of the heiress of Waddell House, and the bold glaring displays of Lady Launceston's companion."

## CHAPTER VII.

Priuli is——a senator!

VENICE PRESERVED.

SIR BROOKE RAWLEIGH and Mr. Lexley were so unfortunate as to belong to different clubs; and the private residence of the latter was therefore selected as the scene of their negotiations. It is not to be supposed that wholesale and retail dealer in Parliament could have fixed his domicile in any other parish than that of St. Margaret, Westminster; and Sir Brooke accordingly found himself driven to the entrance of a paved court,—an old-fashioned cul-de-sac whose heavy architraves of carved wood-work, narrow windows, and ostensible roofing of red tile, formed a melancholy moment of the domestic architecture in vogue during the early days of the Hanoverian succession. A peep into the Birdcage-walk, at the peril of dislocation,—and the unceasing carillon of St. Margaret's chimes, formed the sole enlivenment of this dingy senatorial retreat.

A mysterious-looking, middle-aged man, with speckled stockings, powdered hair, and a slight hint of a pig-tail,—who might have been indiscriminately taken for a butler, a clerk, or a secretary,—circumspectly ushered the expected guest into his master's study; with a whispered assurance that Mr. Lexley would shortly make his appearance, having probably been detained at the House; and Sir Brooke, as he gazed around the uninviting chamber, could not but feel that he should be very unwilling to adopt the habits of life of this active servant of the country, in assuming a similar weight of parliamentary responsibility. He examined the tall, dark, spider-legged mahogany writing-table,—spotted with much ink, and indented with severe penmanship;—the unsightly book-cases filled with vellum-bound folios and buff-leather quartos,—(REPORTS, from Vol. I. to Vol. DXXVIII.,)—and a ragged regiment of loose and unconnected pamphlets;—the chimney-piece graced with two dusty glass girandoles and a museum of printed and wafered circulars, addressed by

...many with Russ  
ered memoranda collected under the p  
liamy's choicest bronze,—and its artifi  
by reading-lamps and shaded candles,  
assisted Methuselah or old Parr to decip  
without spectacles!

After the miserable solitude of a quart  
in a retreat presenting few extraneous  
the attention of its owner from the dry  
saw fit to devote his existence, a hurried  
Lexley's return; and having accosted  
with an incoherent explanation touching  
division, the harassed member alluded  
washing those hands, the cleanliness of  
much lauded by Sir Brooke to Frederica,  
creaking stairs in his usual flurry of super

Rawleigh, who was now growing hur  
was right glad when at length he found  
posite to his host at the dinner table; wit  
diaphanous mock-turtle, and a dish of flaccid  
in horse-radish, and surrounded by some sm  
ency of cuttle-fish, standing between them.  
in some degree appeased his appetite with  
provisions,—which Mr. Lexley announced  
fare," or "pot luck," or some other apolog  
a filthy dinner,—Sir Brooke, on casting  
him, perceived that a well stored dumb-w  
near his host, and another within his own  
sooner had the mysterious butler placed u  
bottles of sherry, a saddle of rancid mutt  
mashed potatoes, and a tepid salad, than  
attendance;—closing the door as ab  
his master.

in all these mysterious preparations for secrecy. Nothing was wanting but Miss Kelly, to render the scene a perfect melodrame!

It is to be hoped that the courteous reader of these memoirs, has formed no expectation of hearing *what* it was that Mr. Lexley thought fit to utter, when he found himself "*alone*" with his friend Sir Brooks and the two dumb-waiters. The mysteries of Isis are not *more* rigidly sacred in our sight, than those occasionally transacted in the parish of St. Margaret; and if the process which sufficed to render our estimable Rawleigh sole representative of the respectable borough of Martwich should ever chance to be betrayed to posterity, so indiscreet a revelation shall never be traced to our pages. We prefer adjourning from Mr. Lexley's second course to the dinner in Charles-street.

Already predisposed against the claims and encroachments of Miss Elbany, Lady Rawleigh felt extremely indignant on entering her mother's crowded drawing-room, to observe Lord Launceston hanging over her chair; and devoting to the Companion that species of distinguishing incense which he had no longer any right to offer except upon the altar at Kensington Gore. If any excuse could be made for his levity, it might have been assuredly found in the surpassing loveliness of the object of his infidelity; Frederica, who had never before beheld her with the advantages of evening dress, was astonished by the perfect symmetry of Lucy's commanding figure, and by the graceful turn of her head and shoulders. But her attention was not long permitted to rest on details so captivating and so fraught with vexation to herself. Lady Olivia Tadcaster was now announced, bearing upon one arm a steel embroidered orange-coloured velvet reticule emulating the dimensions of a night-bag, and gleaming with the superficial splendours of the Palace Royal;—and upon the other, an elegant looking little woman rather over-dressed, whom she eagerly presented to the attentions of her niece, as her friend Mrs. Woodington.

Lady Rawleigh instantly recognised in the sparkling miniature before her,—in which a few of the defeatures of time were varnished over by the hand of a skilful artist,—a very rich widow who had long been the object of Lady Olivia's matrimonial manœuvres in favour of her nephew; and Frederica could not help regretting, as she gazed upon the elaboration of Mrs. Woodington's toilet,—the waving of her feathers,—the profusion of her trinkets,—and the intricate precision of the plaiting of her *béret* sleeves,—that so much

labour was lavished on an ingrate. It was indeed a matter of very little surprise to her that Lord Launceston should prefer the graceful and girlish simplicity of his Leonora to the artificial and *apprêté* ornateness of the showy little widow of Woodington park; who was notoriously on the look out for an exchange between a poor coronet, and her liberal jointure. But she felt that her brother would have been far more becomingly employed in doing the honours of his mother's house to his mother's guests, than in listening entranced to the "persuasive words and more persuasive sighs" of Miss Lucy Elbany.

Her own attention, however, was soon monopolized by the assiduities of Sir Robert Morse; who appeared as much delighted to welcome Lady Rawleigh back to her former haunts, as if he had never aspired to the smiles of Miss Rawdon;—as anxious to assume the tone of the favoured friend, as if he had never found himself a disappointed suitor.—Lord Launceston was compelled to do the honours of the table to an old card-playing Countess Ronthorst, and an ancient Lady Lavinia Lisle (a spinster, whose matrimonial engagements had been ruptured by the loss of her lover in the first American war); his glances straying ever and anon towards the fine contour of Lucy Elbany's head, which turned towards himself only the chignon of its luxuriant raven hair, and towards her neighbour, Sir Mark Milman the lustre of its countenance;—while Colonel Rhyse, who would willingly have profited by his position on the left of the Companion to divert himself with the liveliness of her sallies, and the exquisite art with which she contrived to call forth and illustrate the absurdities of Sir Mark, found himself obliged to listen to the nimini-pimini, underbred, officious nothings of little Mrs. Woodington, which he knew were bestowed upon him solely in honour of his Pyladeship with their noble host. The grimacing widow was far too accurately aware of the value of herself and her jointure, to dream of throwing away her attentions, on any other grounds, upon a mere Colonel in the Guards; fourth son to a paltry Irish earl,—the list of whose offspring occupied a whole page in the peerage.

The only person of the party posted to her entire satisfaction, was poor Lady Launceston; who enjoyed the consciousness of a large Japan screen between herself and the windows, of a chauffrette at her feet, and a fat comfortable old dowager lord on each side, ready to talk to her of the last news of the last century, in tones which would not have drowned the morning hymn of an humble bee. Unless with Dr. Jenner

at her right hand, and Sir Henry Halford or her quotidian apothecary, on her left, she could not have eaten her boiled chicken, and sipped her toast and water in a more gratifying neighbourhood; while the prominent dictatorial Lady Olivia, like a personification of the imperative mood, was very aptly stationed between the preterpluperfect politeness of the obsolete Lord Twadell, and the subjunctive appendix of Mr. Broughley's modern enlightenment.

"Mr. Broughley was a learned pundit and travelled man;—had seen not only "the Louvre"—(which he appeared to consider as cockneyfied a monument as Aldgate pump)—but he domes of Mecca, and the senate-house of Washington;—had assisted at a storthing at Drontheim—a diet at Pesth;—dallied with the dog-ribbed Indians,—and sat face to face with the mummy of Möops, by the light of one of Davy's safety-lamps, in the Great Pyramid. This active member—not of society—but of all the societies of modern Europe, was one of the few persons to whom Lady Olivia Tadcaster bowed obmissive, as pre-eminent above her omni-motive self.

She had originally made his acquaintance in shooting the falls of the Lahn, on her return from the Taunus mountains, where she had been passing the summer, in order to drink Seltzer water fresh from the rock; and had since intersected his orbit upon her travels,—once in the cabinet of the Japanese Palace at Dresden, and once in that of the celebrated restaurateur where the legs of geese are candied in sugar, at Toulouse. He was now recently returned from an Italian tour; and it was astonishing how many dear old friends—Romagnese Princes, Signori Abbati, learned librarians,—Arcadian academicians, blue professors, purple Eminences, ruined temples, ruined routés, captains of banditti, and captains of the papal guard, she found occasion to render the objects of her inquiries. Like the French Marquis, who exclaimed with affectionate recognition, in some royal library, "*Ah! mon cher Cicéron!—c'est le même que Marc-Tulle!*"—her ladyship inquired how the poor dear old Coliseum had stood the winter,—and whether the Palazzo Aldobrandini was likely to get rid of its *mal'aria!*

"Is there any truth, Milman?" inquired Sir Robert Morae of Sir Mark, in the pause of his devotion to Lady Rawleigh, "in the report that Rousford gives up the hounds?"

"Mere ill-nature, Sir—mere ill-nature."

"But they say his health will not allow him to stand another season."

"Scandal, Sir Robert, scandal!—one of the idle reports of the day."

"I trust it may be so; but I can perceive nothing calumnious in saying that Mr. Rousford is consumptive."

"What business has the public with any man's health?—What right have people to feel Mr. Rousford's pulse?—I say, Sir, that all domestic privacy is over in this country!—no individual can put on his night-cap and die in peace, but his last moments are to be discussed, and his mendicament canvassed just as if he was public property. It is an outrage to the liberty of the subject that we can neither share our roast-mutton with a friend, nor have a headache when it suits us, but our motives for the measure, Sir, are to be talked about, and written about, and falsified for nefarious purposes. Half the mischief of modern society is done by this sort of invasion of private life, and idle discussion of our affairs."

"Because you see," said Sir Robert, who—never listening to long sentences of any description, and perceiving that Sir Mark had set in for a prose, had wisely occupied the interval with a glass of hock, and with the task of helping himself to a second *filet de caneton*, "if Rousford has really made up his mind to resign the hounds, he owes it to the county to give us a fair chance for the new appointment. The election cannot be decided in a day."

Lady Rawleigh, whose notions of electioneering were just then confined to the vacancy at Martwich and the pretensions of Sir Brooke, somewhat startled her neighbour by inquiring whether he had any interest in that quarter; but while Sir Robert Morse, who considered the interests of the chase as sacred as Sir Mark Milman appeared to regard the catarrh and tea and toast of private life, was attempting to explain to her that he was an old Meltonian,—incapable of seceding from his party even to be Premier of the Quorn, or the Pychley, her ear was struck by the name of her cousin Lady Mary Trevelyan, uttered in the dry nasal twang of Mr. Broughley.

"Then you did not see my niece during your stay at Rome?"—Lady Olivia was inquiring.

"Lord Trevelyan was at his villa at Vico-Varo during the whole period of my visit; and your ladyship will admit that the attractions of the eternal city do not allow so much force to the claims of friendship, as will sanction the sacrifice of a morning to a country visit."

"A morning!—a mere three hours' drive!—I recollect the first time I visited Horace's Villa, I took the *Archigymnasium*

enza on my way; and ran through the gallery of  
zo Ruspoli on my return."—

ons of inquiring minds," said Broughley, with the  
lids of 'pride which apes humility,' "cannot allow  
s to be deluded with such cursory impressions as  
ent the superficial investigations of the female, the  
nd the tyro."

ere was nothing so revolting to the feelings of Lady  
deaster as to be termed even inferentially "a fe-  
name she estimated as only worthy to designate a  
l, a milliner's apprentice, or the gentler sex of the  
alous species;—she was willing at all times to take  
in any lists for the equality of the sexes, and the  
re of the petticoat, which she considered disparaged  
ontemptuous mention. On the present occasion,  
hip contented herself with a retort un-courteous.

, I must own I wish you *had* extended your super-  
rvations to the beauty of my niece. Although Lady  
velyan may not make so imposing a head for one of  
ers of your tour as some pipkin from Pompeii, or  
from Girgenti, yet the attractions of her own are  
as worthy the notice of all eyes less erudite than  
n F. A. S. One of the *Trecentisti* has written three  
nd sixty-five sonnets in her honour; and Ranzikoff,  
sen's favourite scholar, took a model of her coun-  
or that of the mother of the Maccabees in his cele-  
oup."

d! Have I your ladyship's permission to record  
umstances in my Essay upon the 'Progress of Art  
n Rome!' I am under an engagement to offer  
the Pope, and several *Illustrissimi*; and I am  
hat no important local anecdote should be omitted."  
I write and ask my brother's leave; Prince Culmi-  
off for Naples next week, and will think himself  
to be made the bearer of a letter which may serve  
identials to Vico-Varo."

r your ladyship's correction," said the Universal  
, "I fear that such a mission would prove a severe  
tment to our young friend Prince Culminato. The  
, on my return through Munich, I perceived Lord  
n's courier at the gate of Schwarze Adler;—I under-  
lordship to be on a visit at Tegernsee."

strange!—very extraordinary!" cried Lady Olivia,  
away an untouched plate of *fromage plombière*.  
Launceston, my dear, when did you hear from Tre-



of Sir Antony's which I forwarded to  
I have very little doubt that if he wou  
himself to the regimen of biscuit-pow  
he might get through a winter at Trev  
much difficulty."

"Between ourselves, the only reason  
better in Italy," murmured Lady Oliv  
from being there beyond the reach of m  
nostrums and charlatanism. But what  
last letter, Sophy?"

"I declare I have forgotten!—I thin  
Parma; for I remember feeling very ap  
be tempted to try that odious indigestive  
I received it somewhere about March—I  
my eyes were suffering their annual ag  
wind. Miss Elbany, my dear, when *did*  
brother Trevelyan?"

"I read you a letter from his lordship s  
—and I have been with your ladyship sin  
the companion, who instantly returned to  
Mark Milman;—while Frederica men  
weeks!—*only* six weeks, and mamma al  
dear!"—reading all the family corresponde  
no doubt mine and my brother's. I shal  
give my cousin Mary a hint."

"A very singular person that Lady Ma  
Mrs. Woodington mincingly, but loud en  
Lord Launceston; who she was awar  
in his childhood, by a sort of tacit betroth  
cousin.

"Indeed!" cried his lordship, obedi  
what way

exploring expeditions in Apulia, where the whole party remained on horseback from sunrise to sunset ;—and her cruises in her own yacht among the Greek islands.”

“I conclude my cousin is fond of riding and sailing,—no uncommon taste !” said Frederica, dryly.

“Oh ! certainly,” said Mrs. Woodington, in a deprecating tone, “certainly !—I am far from wishing to cast any imputation on Lady Mary ;—only it *was* considered to argue very unusual—*courage*—on the part of a young and beautiful woman, to defend her father, pistol in hand, when they were surrounded by banditti among the ruins of Pæstum ; and to command the manœuvres of her yacht when they were chased by an Algerine at Lepanto.”

“Admirable courage, indeed !” said Frederica, warming in defence of her cousin. “Courage, both moral and physical.”

“What a horrid Amazon,” observed Miss Elbany, sneeringly, to Colonel Rhyse ; “worse than the maid of Saragossa.”

“A pretty prospect for poor Launceston !” answered the colonel, in the same confidential undertone. “When he breaks off his engagement with this ferocious beauty,—as he certainly will,—she will probably tell him to name his place and weapons, and bring him to book for his desertion.”

“But do you think Lord Launceston *will* break off the engagement ?” said the artful Companion, while a glance of triumph irradiated her large dark eyes.

“*Ça dépend !*” observed Colonel Rhyse, in a voice both lower and more significant ;—so significant, indeed, that it brought a deep blush to the cheeks of the designing Miss Elbany.

“There certainly were many strange stories concerning Lady Mary Trevelyan floating in society at Rome last winter,” observed Broughley, with a tone of authentication.

“Lies !—I will answer for it !” cried Sir Mark Milman. “*All* the stories which *float* in society are lies :—scum always rises to the surface.”

“As for instance,” continued the traveller, without noticing the indignant vehemence of the worthy country-gentleman opposite, “the epigrams which made their appearance last year, in the hands of Pasquin and Marforio, were traced by their witty causticity to the invention of Lord Trevelyan’s daughter. It was even surmised that his holiness had seen fit to speak to the Hanoverian ambassador on the subject.”

“Lies again !” said Sir Mark, angrily. “The pope

decidedly at Lady Mary."

"Suspicion, sir, is a dirty cur,—and in point."

"The position of my cousin Mary," said feeling and spirit, "is one which ought to be very indulgent towards her;—she lost her infancy,—and has ever since been the constant companion of a father, who is a humorist, but sufficiently independent of her whims and fancies, and his own. Lady beautiful, brilliantly accomplished, flattered laughed at."

"Pardon me! Lady Rawleigh, not *laug* Woodington.

"Wept over, then, by the hypocritical!

"My dear Fred.! you are quite eloquent. Launceston, greatly amused by her vainglorious cousin whom she had not seen for fifteen years, appeared inclined to fight under Mary Trevelyan."

"I should have no fear of enlisting, from my yet heard concerning her; I know my cousin's authority, to be a fine generous creature, in action; and if a little headstrong, and proud or contemptuous of the usages of the world, she will find abundance of friends eager to be in favour of ten thousand a-year, and the high Europe."

"Hear, hear!" cried Lord Launceston, with the ardour with which his sister embraced her relative, to whom he was conscious of having been handsomely. Even before his acquaintance with his lawless had been made."

what is due to themselves and their families;—don't you think so, Lord Launceston?"

"Perhaps," observed Lady Lavinia Lisle, in a querimonious voice, "perhaps this misguided young creature may be suffering from some disappointment of the affections;—don't you think so, Lord Launceston?" And without being at all aware of the origin of the confusion now visible in his countenance, she cast a look of timid sensibility on her own skinny fore-finger;—saddled with a lozenge-shaped ring of the size of a tombstone, behind whose glass was braided a lock of hair from the military queue of the martyred hero of the American war; with a flourishing E. B. in diamond sparks, forming the obituary record of Captain Edward Boddington—the beloved victim of Bunker's Hill!

"*Changeons d'entretien*," whispered Frederica to her neighbour, Sir Robert Morse; "the character of poor Lady Mary has been quite sufficiently anatomized."

Now Sir Robert possessed only one intellectual treasury on which he could draw at sight—the stables!—He was one of that numerous class of well-educated Englishmen who devote their whole existence to an inferior animal;—and although too gentlemanly in his habits to emulate the jargon and costume by which certain noble youths assimilate themselves with their own jockeys, a horse was at all times the thing uppermost in his thoughts.

"You don't ride this year, Lady Rawleigh?" said he, on the spur of the moment. "I have not seen you in the park once this season."

"I left my horse in Warwickshire, and Sir Brooke has not one which would carry a lady."

"Have you nothing fit for Lady Rawleigh?" inquired Sir Robert of Lord Launceston.

"I am sorry to say I have nothing fit for any one. My stud is at a miserably low ebb," said his lordship. "I sold off everything last summer except my hunters. But Fred., why did you not bring up your own mare? she suits you perfectly."

"Yes! and she suited you so perfectly to go to cover when you were at Rawleighford, that old John would not hear of my bringing her to town; poor Jessy has been turned out to recruit."

"What have you done with that half-bred Arabian which Lady Rawleigh used sometimes to ride before her marriage?" persisted Sir Robert to his friend. "That was the most complete thing for a lady I ever saw!"

"Oh! I wish I had never parted with him," said Lord Launceston. "He went one black morning, in the general turn out, to Tattersall's.—By the way, Mrs. Woodington, I think I saw you riding Mameluke the other morning?"

"It was lent me by my friend, Admiral Manningtree," replied the widow, delighted to be noticed by Lord Launceston, even on account of her horse. "He wishes to part with it, as being too slight to carry *his* weight; and I shall be only too happy to waive my claims in favour of Lady Rawleigh, should you wish to make the purchase."

"How say you, Frederica,—if I buy Mameluke, will you ride him again?"

"Certainly not;—he would be a very useless horse to you: and you are not well provided for yourself just now."

"Well, then, since you are so punctilious, shall I recommend him to Rawleigh?"

"Still less!—Sir Brooke purchased Jessy for me only last autumn."

"One would think that matrimony had caused a total revolution in your taste," observed Sir Robert Morse, "so fond as you always were of riding!"

"Fred. used to be as determined a centauress as Lady Mary Trevelyan," observed her brother; "and I really never saw the ride so full as it is this year;—it is the only place for meeting every body."

"Who are those handsome girls on white ponies with whom I met Sir Brooke Rawleigh yesterday morning?" inquired Sir Mark Milman of Frederica.

"I really do not know—I have not been in the park this year."

"By Jove, I do believe Rawleigh was cunning enough to put that whim about Jessy into old John's head," said Lord Launceston, laughing, "in order that he may keep the park to himself; for positively she was not out with me half-a-dozen times, and is strong enough for twice my weight."

"Then by all means evade being a dupe by countermining the plot," whispered Sir Robert to Frederica. "Give your sanction to Launceston to make Mameluke his own again;—believe me, nothing avails to counterbalance the injurious effects of a London life like a canter every morning."

"Or if you are too proud to ride your brother's horse, my dear niece," said Lady Olivia Tadcaster, delighted with the notion of a *deal* of any kind, "what can you do better with that little bag of sovereigns I found yesterday morning

on your dressing-table, than indulge in a favourite recreation?"

Now this little bag of sovereigns happened to contain the destined price of the marble fountain which was yet incomplete; but Frederica knew she had three hundred pounds of her *pin money* lying untouched in the hands of Mr. Ruggs, of which only one was bespoken for the Opera; and began to reflect that it would be impossible to appropriate it more to her personal satisfaction than in the purchase of her favourite horse. Besides, she had very little doubt that the handsome girls on the white ponies were the Mapleberrys, under the chaperonage of the odious Lady Lotus.

"What did Admiral Manningtree ask?" inquired Lady Olivia of her friend.

"A hundred guineas."

"And I originally bought him for two hundred and fifty!" exclaimed Lord Launceston.

"I suspect," said the managing little Mrs. Woodington, who with all her finery was not superior to the feminine spirit of a bargain, "I suspect the admiral would be glad to part with him for eighty. It is his daughter's favourite horse; and as she is going abroad to die at Nice, and can have no further occasion for it, it will only be an incumbrance to the admiral. I dare say he will let it go cheap."

"Poor Miss Manningtree!" sighed Lady Lavinia Lisle—"she has never got over that disappointment about Lord Putney. She is in a deep decline."

Unless she has infected Mameluke, *that* is not *our* affair," said Sir Robert Morse, as the ladies rose to leave the dining-room, and he had the happiness of diving under the table for Lady Rawleigh's handkerchief. "Well! does your ladyship authorize Launceston to make the purchase?"

"Inquire about it for me," said Frederica to her brother, whose attention was riveted on the figure of Lucy Elbany drawing on her gloves.

"I will let you know to-morrow," was his vague reply, as his sister turned into the hall.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Thereby so fearless and so fell he grew,  
That his own wyfe and mistress of his guise  
Did often tremble at his horrid view.

SPENSER.

WHEN Frederica returned to Bruton-street, where she found her husband extended upon the sofa in all the martyrdom of indigestion proceeding from the crudities of Mr. Lexley's feast, she had so much to relate touching the diverting little artifices of Mrs. Woodington, and the blindness of her mother to Miss Elbany's designs on the thoughtless Launceston, that her own upon Admiral Manningtree's stables were quite forgotten. She had to complain that, with a very slight preface of apology to herself, her brother had insisted on sending to Bruton-street for her harp, in order that the Companion might indulge her own vanity and his lordship's request, by an exhibition of her musical talents.

"I wish Martin had mentioned it to me when I came in," said Sir Brooke, starting from his recumbent position.

"Oh! all interference would then have been useless. Miss Lucy had given us half-a-dozen sonatas before eleven o'clock."

"Of course;—but if I had known there was to be music, would have put on my hat again, and looked in at your mother's. Conceiving there would be nothing better than Lady Olivia and the whist-table, I laid myself down here and went to sleep until I heard the carriage stop."

"Your wife and the rest of the party in Charles-street are much obliged to you."

"And how does Miss Elbany play?—like a country Miss I suppose, with more vehemence than measure!—But she must make a splendid figure at the harp?"

"Very much like that colossal statue of Melpomene, whose head used to reach the rafters in the King's-mews!—But must do her the justice to say that I never heard a more accomplished musician, nor beheld such complete mastery of

the instrument combined with so much exquisite musical feeling ;—the whole thing was perfection."

"Do let your harp remain in Charles-street, Frederica !—I should like of all things to hear her," said Sir Brooke, deceived by the candour of his wife into forgetting her little previous jealous pique against her mother's companion. "Whenever you want to practice, it will be just as easy for you to play there as at home,—it will remind you of old times."

"I have not the least desire to expose my incapacity by contrasting my performances with those of Miss Elbany, who was doubtless educated for a public performer; but I certainly would comply with your request in that lady's favour, were I not alive to the danger of increasing her attractions in my brother's eyes."

"What can be the harm of making his mornings in Charles-street pass a little more agreeably !—Now *you* are gone, he must find his visits to his mother hang very heavily on his hands; and yet you know Lady Launceston would be very much mortified to find their duration curtailed."

"Perhaps so;—but I have reason to believe that William is under an engagement in another quarter, which renders his attentions to Miss Elbany rather offensive than perilous to himself; in short, his conduct towards her argues a degree of heartless levity, which ought to find some more becoming spot for its indulgence than my mother's roof."

"My pretty little moralist,—my dear magnanimous Reformer !" cried Sir Brooke, in a tone of gaiety which betrayed the lingering effects of the second bottle of Mr. Lexley's ropy sherry, "you shall have it exactly as you please !—You shall send back the carriage for the harp this very moment, if it suit you; and as soon as I am in the House, you shall write me an oratorical burst of indignation respecting military punishments, or the slave trade.—These little severities sit so becomingly on your lips!"

But on the morrow, it became the turn of Rawleigh to play the censor. Before Frederica had finished her bantam's egg, Sir Brooke quitted the breakfast table to communicate, in lengthy epistle to his factotum, the approaching change in his situation; trusting that the prospect of receiving his future letters post-free, might blind that narrow calculator to the painful necessity of booking up to an immediate and considerable amount. But just as he had entangled himself in the middle of a very long and inconclusive sentence,—having as many limbs as Briareus which the baronet was vainly at-



brother-in-law flew up stairs, Sir Brooke all the irritation of equestrian sympathy Thomas jerking the snaffle in its delicate handling a jack-chain.

"My dear fellow!" cried he, as Lord entered the room, "what can tempt you to come to a man—"

"Who passes his days in caning a cause it is not *mine*. Mameluke is the poor wife;—so away with your eggshell, Fred, draft for eighty pounds upon your Mr. Rawleigh whatever his name may be, in favour of Adeline. I have not a moment—make haste—I must close your stables, or we shall have Thomas at the dry-toast rack."

"What is all this?" said Sir Brooke as he took his Bramah's stick from his hands to accept of his brother's invitation. "You surely do not think Rawleigh has bought that horse?"

"No, I bought him,—but Fred. pays for him, afflicted with a fit of heroism last night, after acquainting the party in Charles-street with the state of my finances, refused me the pleasure of purchasing Mameluke on my own account for her service."

"Why *should* you encumber yourself with a horse that must be perfectly useless to you?" said Lord, proceeding to write her order on Mr. Ruggs, in the confusion of her husband's surprise and vexation which he conceived to have been purposed in his knowledge.

"By Heavens!—I have just found it at Launceston, flourishing his whip in—"

"I was anxious only to prevent your throwing away money for my sake," replied his sister, quietly tendering him the cheque. "And now go and settle with the Admiral, and place poor dear Mameluke under the care of Rawleigh's groom;—I wonder what old John will say to him?"

"That is more," thought Sir Brooke, "than she appears to have wondered concerning her husband; who is, however, somewhat more interested in the affair."

"Why should you not ride *to-day*?" said Lord Launceston returning from the door, and eager to conduce to his sister's amusements.

"*Shall we ride to-day, Rawleigh?*" said Frederica. "It promises to be very fine."

"I shall be engaged with Mr. Lexley all the afternoon," replied Sir Brooke coldly.

"Then I will take care of you," cried her brother,—"*provided you do not share in the taste of the Miss Mapleberrys for galloping about the park. I shall be back from Kensington Gore by four o'clock; shall I tell John to bring Mameluke round at that hour?*"

"Pray do!" said Lady Rawleigh, "I shall be glad to assure myself by experience, that he has lost nothing of his paces in poor Miss Manningtree's possession."

Lord Launceston was off in a minute; and Frederica perceiving that her husband had eagerly returned to his writing, forbore to interrupt him by her explanations; but took up "*The undying One*," from the sofa, and ran over those exquisite lines—

To look upon the fairy one who stands  
Before you with her young hair's shining bands,  
And rosy lips half parted; and to muse  
Not on the features which you now peruse,  
Not on the blushing bride, but look beyond  
Unto the angel wife—nor feel less fond;—  
To keep thee but to one—and let that one  
Be to thy home what warmth is to the sun;  
And fondly, firmly, cling to her, nor fear  
The fading touch of each declining year;  
This is true love—when it hath found a rest  
In the deep home of manhood's faithful breast.

In this task she was interrupted by the audible energy of Sir Brooke's penmanship! It appeared to her ears that he was unlucky in sputtering and splitting pens more frequently than she had ever found herself in all her experience of

Bramah's defects; but it never occurred to her that he was in a passion. In about a quarter of an hour, however, he jumped up and rang the bell for a candle to seal his letter.—There are few better criterions of the state of a man's temper, than his mode of ringing the bell;—particularly in a ready furnished house, where they are seldom hung on scientific principles.

Frederica, aware of the delinquencies of the bell-wire, and consequently unsuspicious of her own share in the peal which now rattled in her ears, thought it but an act of justice to Thomas, the bell-ropes, and her husband, to remind him that he would find a taper and the phosphoric matches on her writing table; and Sir Brooke, who was firmly persuaded that his irritation had not escaped her attention, regarded this species of reproof only as an aggravation of her offence. He was obliged however to profit by the suggestion, and inform Thomas, on his panting arrival, that "nothing was wanted;" and while the footman retreated, congratulating himself that the house was not on fire, nor his lady in a fainting fit, a match whizzed in the or-molu vase, the pungent fumes of the phosphorus tingled the nose of the unlucky Rawleigh, and the little taper startled into light!

A still more perplexing trial awaits the angry man in sealing a letter!—Absent and tremulous, he is sure to burn his fingers;—and this is exactly what chanced to Sir Brooke. The pain was exquisite; and elicited so vivacious an apostrophe to the sealing-wax, that Frederica laid down her book with amazement.

"My dear Rawleigh, have you burnt yourself?" she inquired with startled solicitude.

The reply of Sir Brooke need not be recorded; it was comprehended in that very reprehensible adverb which is reported by Lord Byron to have been the cause of his first conjugal quarrel, as a reply to her ladyship's inquiry—(probably at some moment equally propitious with that of poor Frederica)—"whether she bored 'him!'" Lady Rawleigh, if less implacably offended, was deeply hurt by so harsh a breach of respect towards herself; but concluding that her husband would apologize when the smart abated, she uttered not a syllable or remonstrance.

It is rather surprising, that being herself endued with that slight touch of jealousy which is inseparable from a quick sensibility, Lady Rawleigh should have remained completely blind to the existence of a similar feeling on the part of her husband. No man could be more purely and affectionately

devoted to a woman—to a wife—than Sir Brooke to herself. But, unfortunately, he had passed half-a-dozen seasons in London prior to his marriage; where the adventures in which he beheld certain of his young companions engaged, and which had more than once tempted his own steadiness of moral character somewhat out of the perpendicular, perplexed him with a painful conviction of the levity of womankind, which was in fact the origin of his deliberation in tendering his proposals to Miss Rawdon. He had perfect confidence in Frederica;—he knew Lady Launceston to be a very worthy woman, who had educated her daughter in the strict principles of the old school;—but he did not feel himself the less imperatively bound to preserve the flower thus delicately reared and nurtured from the pollutions of the world. In uniting himself with the fair and gentle Frederica Rawdon, he had uttered a secret vow to secure his wife as far as the conventions of society would admit, from the profanation of libertine approach, and the contagion of frivolous companionship.

It was this very strictness of principle which in the first instance suggested his objections against pin money, as a pernicious ministrant to feminine independence; and which originated his disinclination for the opera-box,—where he saw she must be exposed to the contact of all Mrs. William Erskyne's train of admirers,—nay, perhaps her own. He knew that she was too lovely not to be courted and followed;—and feared she was too guilelessly unsuspecting, not to give unintentional encouragement to this species of adulation!

But above all, his desire to retain the beauty of his bride for his own adoration, and her society for his own enjoyment, had been the sole cause of Jessy's condemnation to an idle spring in the Rawleighford meadows. Sir Brooke was fully aware that of all the opportunities afforded to flirtation, a side-saddle is the most propitious; that in the hilarity of the open air, the approach to familiarity is dangerously easy; that a thousand things are said, and heard, and smiled at in the publicity of a morning ride, which would be resented in the domestic privacy of home; and recalling to mind the extreme passion of almost every giddy woman of his acquaintance for exhibiting herself on horseback in London, he judged it prudent to give his hint to the old groom.

Now although perfectly satisfied that this hint had never indirectly reached his wife, he could not help persuading himself that Frederica was—or at least should or might have been—suspicious of his peculiar views on the subject; and he was now of opinion that the submissive acquiescence with

which she received his sentence on her favourite mare, had arisen from a pre-determination to avail herself of the facilities afforded by her *pin money* to add artifice to defiance, and secure her daily exhibition in the park. He conceived himself to have been ungenerously used, both by Lord Launceator and his sister; and this second offence of her financial independence excited such a tumult of vexation in his heart, that the corrosion of the burning sealing-wax applied to his little finger, was by no means necessary to torture forth from his lips the unbecoming adverb already implied.

Lady Rawleigh, meanwhile, was wholly unconscious of the train leading to the mine which had thus abruptly exploded; and the major and the minor of his provocations having been unuttered, the conclusion assumed a most inexplicable tone of violence in her ears. She had as little suspicion that Rawleigh was jealous, as that she was jealous herself; and till his disorder should assume the form of nervous headaches, there appeared no probability that her mind would become further enlightened. Even when—the monumental blister of his burn having duly made its appearance and given the sealing-wax and his anger ample leisure to cool,—he deliberately stalked out of the room with Ruggs's letter in his hand;—even when, after a rattling in the stool and umbrella stand in the hall, she heard the street door slammed, manifestly without the intervention of her well-trained and well-practised domestics,—she never for a moment conjectured that herself or her doings had any share in the unwonted distemperature of mood which tempted Sir Brooke, for the first time since her marriage, to quit the house without bidding her good-bye!

"How I hate him to have any intercourse with that pre-matrical Ruggs!" murmured Frederica, patiently resuming her volume. "Men are always out of sorts after a communication with their bailiff, or an investigation of their banker's book. And then he is so much interested and occupied with this negotiation with Mr. Lexley;—and should it succeed his time will be so wretchedly engrossed by his parliamentary duties!—Ah! I foresee I shall not have half so pleasant a spring as I expected;—for that impertinent companion in Charles-street will prevent me from consoling myself by passing the time of his absence with mamma!—I dare say Rawleigh is only gone to his club, and did not think it necessary to take leave of me for that half hour?—But there surely he said something of passing the day with Mr. Lexley'—So that perhaps he may go round to the stables for his

horse, after he has read the newspapers, without coming home at all!—How very provoking!—All the pleasure of my first ride will be lost, unless I see dear Rawleigh for a minute or two before we set off."

It may be observed, on occasions of disagreement in wedded life, that where a quarrel has not exactly declared itself, or a state of hostility sent forth its gauntlet of defiance, a species of uneasy consciousness forewarns the pacific party that something is wrong. Like the inhabitants of a volcanic region, they hear strange noises in the air, and mysterious sounds in the earth, unnoticed of every casual passenger, but prophetic of an eruption.

Between the breakfast hour, accordingly, and that appointed for her ride, Lady Rawleigh endured a prolonged martyrdom of suspense; and it appeared to her as if every creature of her acquaintance had entered into a combination against her peace. A host of early morning visitors seemed to league itself for her torment. Lady Olivia Tadcaster first made her appearance with a large roll in her hand resembling that of a paperhanger; containing patterns from Besford's of garlands which were to be embroidered on a *couvre pied*, nominally by her ladyship's own hands, but virtually by those of every idle victim she could manage to recruit into the service.—While Frederica was listening with the most anxious attention for her husband's knock,—or, as the street door would probably remain open for the amusement of Lady Olivia's servants, so that he might enter unobserved,—for the creaking of the floor of his dressing-room above, her indefatigable aunt persisted in rolling and unrolling these crackling papers, the music of which might have served for a shower of hail at a minor theatre!—Unless the person of Sir Brooke had emulated the ponderosity of poor Chuny, there could be no hope that the yielding boards above would produce an echo capable of drowning the united efforts of Lady Olivia's tongue, and Lady Olivia's rattling peals of thunder.

Before her ladyship's choice had been fully decided between the comparative facilities afforded to the needle by the sinuosities of the olive-branch, and the serrated leaves of the fern, Lady Lawford—perceiving by the equipage standing at the door, that Frederica was at home to morning visitors—took the opportunity of bestowing upon her a visitation as long, as tedious, and as unprofitable, as if it had been paid at Rawleighford on a misty morning in November; and whereas in Warwickshire, she never decanted on any but London topics,—fashion, scandal, and dissipation,—in Bruton-street

she fudged it more effective to enlarge upon her new dairy, and the spinning prizes and bobbin lace prizes she had recently instituted in her own village. While she was favouring them with recitals and hints of her beneficent anti-pauperic plans, which would really have talked well in Parliament, and which had only the demerit of being incapable of fulfilment in any country less loosely legislated than Cochinchina, Lady Olivia occasionally interpolated a suggestion of amelioration, borrowed from the experience of her travels;—sometimes from an *ospidaletto* at Ancona,—sometimes from a *Spinn-haus* at Haerlem. These ladies talked and argued, as argumentative ladies are apt to do,—simultaneously; while Frederica had to support the martyrdom of hearing knocks at the door fired off like minute guns,—without venturing such a breach of decorum as to ring and inquire the names of her ceremonious visitors, and deafened by her vociferous companions beyond the power of distinguishing her husband's knock. Dull indeed, must be the feminine ear which does not speedily acquire that auricular instinct!—but alas! *what* instinct may avail amidst the din of an oil-mill,—or the rhetorical dispute of two female Utilitarians, in the healthy maturity of their lungs!

At length, to her infinite joy, Lady Lawford, with her cheek bleached, and her nose reddened by suppressed anger,—for Lady Olivia had out-talked her, as she would have done O'Kelly's parrot which chattered incessantly for one hundred years,—rose to depart. But no sooner had her carriage driven away, and the victorious mistress of the field, elated by her success, commenced a long diatribe against the folly of Lady Launceston, in forcing the company of Miss Elbany on her guests, than the door burst open; and Frederica, in the sanguine anticipations of her affection, half rose from the sofa, to welcome her husband.—But, alas!—it was only Mrs. William Erskyne, who bounded into the room! Seizing Lady Rawleigh by the hand, she cast upon her aunt a glance of contemptuous detestation which would have exterminated any woman of less robust health than Lady Olivia Tadcaster;—who, regarding her niece's sippant friend as a species of gnat, troublesome in proportion to its insignificance, resolved to avoid the wing and sting of her insect antagonist by a hasty farewell to Frederica.

“And now, my dear,” cried Mrs. Erskyne, “now that sempiternal Semiramis in tiffany, your respectable aunt, has taken her departure,—put on your bonnet and come with me, without asking me why or whither.—Do not look so terrified,

child!—I will not decoy you to a conjurer's or a dentist's,—although I make you my own in spite of your teeth."

"I am not alarmed," replied Frederica, laughing at her mysterious eagerness; "but believe me, I cannot be the victim of your despotism this morning; I ride with Launceston at four o'clock."

"And it is not yet three!—Surely you do not require more than ten minutes for the adjustment of your Calypso?"

"Not five, I should imagine. But I am waiting for Rawleigh."

"To walk with you, arm-in-arm, to the Cosmorama, or Macdonald's statues, like the living picture of country cousinhood!—Fie! my dear Fred!—will you never get rid of your odious provincial habits!—You positively deserve to be painted, framed and glazed, and hung up in the parlour of the Rawleigh arms as a pendant to the gentleman in top-boots, pointing out the nest of two turtle-doves to a lady in yellow shoes and a blue veil,—and ticketed with the pleasing title of Domestic Felicity."

"But you will really bring me back in time for my ride?" said Lady Rawleigh, without considering to what clause of her friend's argument this disjunctive conjunction attached itself.

"Grant me half an hour, and afterwards I am your slave till midnight;" cried Mrs. Erskyne.

"Je veux donner une heure aux soins de mon empire,  
Et le reste du jour tout entier à Zaire."

Unused to assert her independence, and like most other persons inexperienced in the world peculiarly under the influence of irony, poor Lady Rawleigh found herself quizzed into the necessity of following her friend into the chariot waiting at the door. She had however the negative consolation of learning from the butler, in butler phrase, as she passed him in the hall, that Sir Brooke had not "been in."



## CHAPTER IX.

The connoisseur takes out his glass to pry  
 Into each picture with a curious eye ;  
 Turns topsy-turvy my whole composition,  
 And makes mere portraits all my exhibition.  
 From various forms, Apelles, Venus drew,  
 So from the million do I copy you :  
 " But still the copy's so exact," you say ;—  
 Alas !—the same thing happens every day !

SAMUEL FOOTE.

LADY RAWLEIGH was too well acquainted with the nature of the trivialities as actuating the incidents of Mrs. Erskyne's existence, to expect any very important result from her compliance with the request thus peremptorily urged ;—she anticipated the sight of some new vase at Rittener's, some new ribbon at Harding's, or some new lithograph at Colnaghi's, as the utmost object of their expedition. Nor were her calculations very erroneous.

As they stopped at a private door in Regent-street, Louisa, assuming a smile of mysterious intelligence, exclaimed, " Now you must give me your candid opinion ;—remember, I brought you hither for the benefit of your impartial advice !—I have no wish to be flattered, Frederica ;—a woman's flattery always sounds to me as hollow as the Thames-tunnel."

Extremely puzzled as to the nature of the occasion which could render flattery distasteful to a little coquette like Louisa, Lady Rawleigh followed her friend into a small apartment ; in the centre of which stood an easel covered with a sheet of silver paper.

" You must give me your sincere opinion as to the likeness," cried Mrs. Erskyne. " I have been sitting to Richard ; and to-day we are to decide, with the assistance of your better judgment, on the costume. There !" she exclaimed, drawing the last pin from the sheet, and displaying a half-finished miniature. "*Me voilà comme deux gouttes d'eau !*"—when lo ! an exquisite likeness of Miss Lucy Elbany burst upon their astonished eyes !—

"How strange!" cried Frederica.

"How provoking!" murmured Mrs. Erskyne.

But in another moment Monsieur Rochard made his appearance, to rescue his property from their inopportune investigation, and to produce the portrait of Louisa from a secret drawer.—With a very clear conscience did Lady Rawleigh assure her friend of the resemblance as well as the exquisite perfection of the performance. It was in fact Mrs. Erskyne herself,—softened by that touch of sentiment so wholly wanting in her own nature, and so seldom wanting in the graceful portraits of Rochard.

After an eager discussion of the comparative merits of a fashionable ball-dress,—of a Vandyke costume,—a Rembrantized pelisse,—an aerial vesture of clouds—and the descriptive attractions of Rebecca, Annot Lyle, Medora, Yarico, a Peri, a Zingana, an Albanian peasant, and a Polish princess,—which left poor Louisa Erskyne doubly perplexed by the multifarious suggestions of her fickle vanity, Frederica hazarded a request for a second glance at the miniature which had occupied the easel on their entrance. But the obliging artist, on an allusion to the subject, became suddenly as mysterious as if he had arrayed himself in the cloudy mantle in which Louisa had been so desirous of enveloping the Iris-like outline of her own portrait.

"*Ah! pardon!*" said Monsieur Rochard, with as decided a tone as politeness would allow, "*mais d'abord c'est impossible. Cette jeune dame tient beaucoup au mystère; elle se fait peindre pour offrir une surprise agréable à quelqu'un de sa famille.*"

"Of my family, rather!" thought Lady Rawleigh.

"But as we do not know the lady," said Mrs. Erskyne, who very seldom entered Lady Launceston's dowager door, and had never seen the Companion,—*"we cannot betray her secret. Pray let us look at it again."*

"I do not wonder, Madam, at your eagerness," said the artist; "for never did so faultless a model present itself to my pencil. But as I have promised to secure the picture from observation, I am persuaded you will not desire me to betray the confidence reposed in me."

Louisa, who was far more interested in the successful delineation of her own face than in the charms of the Venus de Medicis herself, readily dismissed the subject; and after some further arguments touching her dress and appointment for the following day, took her leave, and performed her promise of conveying Lady Rawleigh back to Bruton-street, whose

attention was now completely engrossed by the mystery of Miss Elbany's sitting for her picture at the cost of thirty guineas. That it was destined for Lord Launceston she did not for a moment doubt; and Frederica almost wished she had accepted his offer touching the purchase of Mameluke, when she considered the objects to which he appeared inclined to devote his superfluous cash. The miniature of his mother's beautiful companion could only be valuable in his eyes as a specimen of *virtù*; and his sister naturally adjudged it to be a very unbecoming addition to the gallery at Marston Park.

On reaching home, her first measure was a repetition of her inquiry to Martin touching the return of Sir Brooke; in reply to which, she had the vexation of learning that her husband had been at home for a quarter of an hour during her absence.

"Did he leave any message for me?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he inquire for me?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he go into the drawing-room, Martin?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he say whether he dined at home?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he order his horse?"

"No, my lady."

"His phaeton?"

"No, my lady."

But Lady Rawleigh, happening to lift her eyes from the stair-carpet, at this crisis of her cross-examination, perceived that the identical Thomas, who had so grievously abused the fine mouth of Mameluke during breakfast, was now opening his own to display a row of teeth—resembling a concatenation of milestones—at her expense! and she was hurrying up stairs to avoid the irritation of witnessing his impertinence, when the Jackanapes, descending from his consequential altitude as a standard footman, vouchsafed to volunteer some further information respecting his master's movements.

"Sir Brooke went into the library, my lady, to answer a note; and I mentioned to him that your ladyship was gone out airing with Mrs. William Erskyne."

"Did he ask how long I had been gone?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he inquire whether I had left any message?"

"No, my lady."

"Did he give no orders then?"

"No, my lady."

"Nor say anything?"

"Oh! yes, my lady"—

"What did he tell you?" said Frederica, stopping short on the stairs.

"To shut the door, my lady," said the footman, smothering a laugh,—with a persuasion that he had succeeded in mystifying his gentle and indulgent mistress. It was well for Mr. Thomas that Lord Launceston, who a few minutes afterwards was at the door assisting Lady Rawleigh to mount her new purchase, had no suspicion of his insolence; or the whip which he placed in her hands might have found a more apposite employment than that of tickling the shoulders of Mameluke.

"Where shall we go?" said Lord Launceston.

"Anywhere you please," was Frederica's listless reply;—and uttered with better faith than usually dictates that very comprehensive answer.

"Hyde Park is full of dust and dandies; and the Regent's, of exhibitions and east wind."

"Shall we go and see the Hammersmith bridge?" inquired Lady Rawleigh.

"By all means!" said Lord Launceston, turning his horse's head in that direction. "Although, as my friend Mrs. Waddleston elegantly observes, we may chance to be smothered in onions among those detestable market gardens at Battersea."

"I should imagine they were guilty of nothing less refined than strawberries and asparagus at this season of the year; and every now and then one is refreshed along that road by the sight of a staring old red brick villa of King William's time, with a cedar or two in the garden, looking as if it had strayed from Mount Carmel!"—

"Or been planted by the hand of Sir Hans Sloane. I like those comfortable suburban retreats; they make one fancy that Orpheus has been striking up his country dances in Hanover-square,—beguiled its solid square mansions along the Fulham-road,—and left them scattered among plantations of Scotch firs."—

"Your friends the Waddlestons reside somewhere in that neighbourhood?" said Frederica, by way of affording an opening to her brother's confessions.

"Yes!—My father-in-law's soap manufactory stands on the banks of the Thames somewhere near Battersea," said

his lordship, with the most unembarrassed coolness. "Let us understand that neither tree nor herbage will grow within an acre of its noxious vapours; and that it is indicted as a parochial nuisance once in six weeks.—A nuisance!—vile affectation!—for my part I shall prefer its unctuous exhalations to the sickly aroma of Delcroix's, or of Thevenot's shop. Think, my dear Fred., think how proud you will be when, in washing your fair hands, you detect beneath the intaglio of Windsor-castle on your soap, the names Waddlestone and Co.;—or perhaps, of Waddlestone, Launceston, and Co.!"—

"How can you jest on such a subject?" cried Frederica, vexed by her brother's tone of bravado. "Think rather what would have been my father's feelings, could he have anticipated so degrading a connexion for his only son."—

"My father used to make an annual speech on the amelioration of the manufacturing classes;—and how can we amend them more satisfactorily than by a mutual exchange of our superfluous commodities—rank and wealth? By the way, Fred., I had a narrow escape of being bored into my grave yesterday, by one of Rawleigh's stuped old stiffnecked relations. As I was riding into the Waddlestones' court-yard, I had the good fortune to encounter Mrs. Martha Derenzy's ark upon wheels."

"Does *she* visit those vulgar people?"

"She had been sitting toadying the soap-boiler's wife for two long mortal hours, by way of converting the luncheon at Waddlestone-house into her own early dinner. Yesterday she even brought some poor relation of the family to profit by the opportunity;—some silly prating girl, whose forward airs completely disgusted my poor dear timid Mrs. Waddlestone."

Frederica felt the colour rush into her cheeks; but suspecting that she had been detected by her brother, and that he was trying to provoke her into a betrayal of herself, she quietly rejoined, "Poor Mrs. Martha is not rich, and has a tribe of indigent nieces; we must not be too severe upon her for trying to secure a comfortable meal for one of them.—Do you often dine at Waddlestone-house?"

"Not so frequently, perhaps, as I ought, under all the circumstances. When I first came to town, I was there every day; but since I discovered metal more attractive in Charles-street!"—

"Bronze more Corinthian, you might say!"—

"I have somewhat neglected the *melting* charms of my Leonora."

"An honourable alternative certainly, between a tradesman's daughter and my mother's Companion! Oh! Launceston—Launceston!—I thought you had better judgment."

"Between the *beaux yeux* of the one, and the *beaux yeux de la cassette* of the other, my heart—"

"Pray do not profane your heart by mention in such a case! By the way, as Miss Leonora is so experienced an artist, and Miss Lucy so admirable a model, I wonder you have not brought them together for the love of the arts!"

"A good hint, Frederica!—I will certainly persuade my mother to bring down Miss Elbany to Marston, and Leonora shall beguile the honeymoon, by taking her likeness."

"If such are your views, let me beg you, William, to refrain from mentioning the names of either of these ladies to me again; I never heard you talk in a strain so little to my taste."

"You are growing fastidious and prudish from living too much in provincial society. But never mind, Fred., when you have passed a little time with Mrs. Waddlestone, you will resume all your former refinement. She will talk to you of 'bon ton' and the 'beau monde,' 'd pâmer de rire,' as she would gracefully express herself."

"Pray let us talk on some more pleasing subject."

"Your husband's election, then. Do tell me, Fred., is it true that Rawleigh has purchased the right of 'mumbling a few words inaudible in the gallery,' in the name and behalf of the borough of Martwich?"

"There is some negotiation on foot between him and Mr. Lexley."

"Negotiation! I had a better opinion of my friend Rawleigh. If he wants to get into the House, why not wait for the general election, and start for the county, like a man?"

"Because there is no vacancy;—and Sir Brooke has a great respect for our present county members."

"And no ready money to throw away on a contest. Yes! I perfectly understand that sort of patriotic magnanimity!—The truth is that Rawleigh is a deuced careful fellow; and will weigh well his thirty pieces of silver before he has haggled through his bargain with that dealer in parliamentary stores, Mr. Judas Lexley."

Frederica fired up for her husband; and was about to retaliate on the meanness of that prodigality which stoops to repair its shattered fortunes in a soap-boiler's cauldron, when her better nature arrested the angry retort upon her lips. She could not, even in defence of Sir Brooke, resolve to give pain

to her beloved brother ! Indeed it is very difficult to indulge in a rancorous feeling towards any offender, on a pure balmy day in May, with the young leaves quivering and the blossoms opening around us ; more especially when mounted on a favourite horse, which has been denied to our use for many previous months.

Lady Rawleigh, in the enjoyment of her ride, forgot for a time all the vexations of the morning ; and when on her return to Bruton-street, she accidentally encountered at the door the beloved object of her brother's ill-natured sarcasms, in whose favour her feelings were particularly moved by having recently heard him unfairly aspersed, she invited him by so affectionate a smile to assist her from her horse, that Sir Brooke was for a moment tempted to forget them also. Her eyes were so brightened by exercise,—her cheek, glowing with health and youthful animation, afforded so becoming a relief to the locks slightly disordered by the effects of her ride,—that poor Rawleigh saw nothing in her aspect but the beaming and expressive loveliness of his own Frederica.

“ But as he was about to offer her his arm across the hall, the recollection that all this beauty had been deliberately, and in his despite, exhibited to the admiration of every libertine loungeur in Hyde-park, and that all this animated cheerfulness was probably borrowed from the impulses of gratified vanity, he made way for his wife to gather up the train of her habit ; and followed her up stairs with a feeling of as much bilious irritation, as though he had been already gazetted for Martwich, and had already numbered in a critical minority.

## CHAPTER X.

Beauty, though injurious, hath strange power  
 After offence returning, to regain  
 Love once possessed; nor can be easily  
 Repulsed, without much inward passion felt,  
 And secret sting of amorous remorse.

MILTON.

"WELL! my dear!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, starting from an armchair to receive her, as Frederica entered the drawing-room, cheered by the prospect of a tête-à-tête dinner and evening with her husband. "Here you find me, in undisputed possession of the garrison!"

"You are come, I trust, to dine with us?" said poor Lady Rawleigh, in a tone of deep despondency, which vainly tried to sound hospitable, on perceiving by her aunt's full-dress cap and point-lace *canzou*, that it was intended for an evening visit.

"I am, indeed;—and I will explain to you all the *perché* of the business during dinner. It only wants a quarter to eight, so go and change your habit, my dear child, or your soles will be boiled into isinglass."

Lady Rawleigh, sincerely wishing that her aunt would change her habit of inquiring into other people's bills of fare and accepting them at sight without invitation, hastened to comply; while Sir Brooke, who had anticipated with some degree of embarrassment his solitary interview with his offending wife, and the difficulty of preserving the dignified demeanour of dissatisfaction with the person who helps one to a second cutlet, and waits to be invited to a glass of *Mosselle*,—and who, moreover, was aware that Lady Olivia had been too long a resident on the continent to entertain any disgust towards gentlemen who eat their dinner in boots,—was extremely courteous and cordial in his welcome. By the time Frederica, rescued from her masculine disguise and with her beautiful hair recalled to its usual trimly array, re-entered the drawing-room, her ladyship had got as far as the second clause of her promised explanation; which, without any signal of *da capo* from poor Sir Brooke, she proceeded



leisurely to recapitulate for the edification of his wife on seating herself at the dinner-table between them.

"You see, my dear Fred.—as I told ~~you~~ this morning—I ~~was~~ engaged to your mother, who is ~~far~~ from well, for a boiled chicken in her dressing-room at ~~six~~ o'clock; because I wished to begin my evening early, having a conversazione at Professor Axiom's at nine—a concert at the little duchess's at ten—and the assembly at Suffolk House at eleven."

"I trust mamma was not too much indisposed to receive you?" exclaimed Frederica, considerably agitated.

"No, my dear—nothing urgent; my sister is no worse than she has been for the last ~~five~~ and-twenty years. But unluckily, after you quitted me ~~this~~ morning to go wandering about town with that flighty young friend of yours, I took it into my head to drive to the West India Docks, to see whether my protégé, Captain Mopsley, of the Scarmouth Castle, who is just arrived from Barbadoes, has brought the consignment of parrot's feathers I commissioned him to procure for my friend Princess Drakouitski. I cannot think what induced Mopsley to be so indiscreet,—but he persuaded me to go over the ship with him; and while I was tasting a few preserved limes, with an arra-root biscuit in the cabin, he thought proper to mention (for the *first* time, observe) that he had been in quarantine off the Isle of Wight;—for that on the voyage home the purser and one guinea-pig had died—*actually died*—of the yellow fever!—My dear niece, you might have knocked me down with one of the parrot's feathers."

"How extremely incautious!—how very unpleasant!" exclaimed Sir Brooke, looking with some satisfaction at the voluminous extent of damask table-cloth which divided Lady Olivia in equidistance from himself and his dear Frederica. "Martin, bring me a glass of Maderia, and take another to Lady Rawleigh;—old Maderia is an anti-febrile specific. Lady Olivia, let me recommend *you* a glass; it may not yet be too late."

"Oh! I consider myself more than safe. I drove straight from Mile End to Sanger's in Oxford-street, and after drinking in the shop half a phial of Dr. Lotionostic's anti-pestiferous drops, caused my dress to be fumigated with the celebrated *Zimmer Rauch*, such as is used by the Turkish officers of health, at the quarantine Lazaretto in the pass of Rothenthurm."

"I thought I perceived the pungent odour of Thieves' vinegar in the drawing-room," observed Sir Brooke; "I

was apprehensive that Lady Rawleigh might have been indisposed."

Lady Rawleigh felt particularly gratified by the tone of concern in which this apprehension was expressed.

"And so you see, my dear Frederica, happening to mention this untoward incident in Charles-street, your mother became as much alarmed as if I had arrived in a balloon from Grand Cairo;—nothing would induce her to sit down to table with me;—and that silly impertinent Miss Elbany pretended to discern some livid spots about my eyes. She declared that the plague was written in my aspect; and everything that *she* declares, you know, is authentic with my sister."

"I have not the least doubt," said Lady Rawleigh, "that mamma expected Launceston to dinner, and that the companion wished to secure her interview with him from your observation."

"Very likely!—but we must defeat her manœuvres. My carriage will be here immediately after dinner to take me to my conversazione, and you must let me set you down in Charles-street."

"It was my intention to go and inquire after mamma before I began to dress for Suffolk-house," said Frederica; "but I have no idea of visiting her *en moucharde*. Launceston is old enough to judge for himself; and if he chooses to degrade his family by a union with his mother's companion"—she stopped short—for a sudden reminiscence of Mrs. Waddlestone, served to remind her that it was not his *marriage* with Miss Lucy Elbany which was likely to dishonour himself and his connexions.

Fortunately for Frederica, the attention of Lady Olivia was wholly diverted from her embarrassment by the appearance of a dish of *coquilles aux huîtres* in the second course,—giving rise to one of her monitory discussions.

"I was quite surprised to learn from my sister the other day, that she had her oysters from Grove!—As if any one in their senses, ever dreamed of purchasing oysters from a fish-monger!"

"Who then ought to furnish them;—the baker?" inquired Sir Brooke, who partook, in some slight degree of his aunt Derenzy's predilection for domestic details.

"It is a trade in itself," replied Lady Olivia, swallowing an oyster with an air of infinite contempt. "Do you imagine that a real gastronome, in Paris, would eat an oyster

from any other hands than those of the shell-fish merchant who sits on the stairs at the Rocher de Cancale?"—

"In Paris;—but we, who reside in London, are compelled to forego that luxury. Martin, who supplies ~~us~~ with oysters?"—inquired Sir Brooke of his butler; who had fixed his eyes upon Lady Olivia with all the abhorrence which upper servants are apt to cherish against visitors who give both trouble and advice.

"Taylor, of Piccadilly, Sir Brooke."

"Take away my plate!" cried Lady Olivia, indignantly; "I would as soon swallow my ~~own~~ kid gloves, as oysters which have been swimming ~~without~~ their shells all the morning in a fishmonger's brown pipkin of cold water."

"Why it stands to reason that their flavour *must* evaporate," observed Sir Brooke, pushing away his own; "Lady Rawleigh is too inexperienced a housekeeper to enter into these details at present. Your ladyship must be generous enough to assist her with your advice."

"Why I will tell you exactly how *I* manage," said Lady Olivia, who had now arrived at the point she desired. "There is a young man lately set up in business at Harwich, who formerly lived as valet with poor dear Mr. Tadcaster, and whom I consider it my duty to patronize. I have given him a commission to supply *me* once a-week during the season; and I will get a frank to-night at Axiom's, and write to him to-morrow to send a supply to *you* at the same time. Your establishment is larger than mine, so that you will require double the quantity."

"Oysters are already out of season," said Frederica, negatively.

"And *once* a-week!" cried Sir Brooke;—"surely it is better to depend upon Taylor for a *daily* supply!"

"By sending the barrels round by Doddingham, which is not above eight or ten miles out of the way, I get them brought at a very reasonable rate by an errand-cart kept by a cousin of my own maid's. It is not *many* days on the road, and the carter is a trustworthy man who may be relied on. Well, my dear child," said Lady Olivia, changing the conversation to escape the excuse of her niece, "and how did you find Mameluke this morning?—It seemed to me, when you stopped at the door, that he went rather lame."

"Oh dear no!—he never went better in his life; I was enchanted with *him* and with my ride."

"Did you meet Sir Robert Morse and Lord Putney?—I

fell in with them just after I left you, and told them you were going out riding at four, and would be glad of their escort."

"I did not happen to see them."

"Why which way did you go?—I thought they could not possibly miss you in the park?"

"But we never went near the park."

"Only *through* it, not near it—the sophistry of fine ladies!" said Sir Brooke half aside.

"Neither near it, nor through it;—but simply along Grosvenor-place, and the King's-road to Hammersmith. I had never seen the suspension bridge, and Launceston was eager to indulge my curiosity."

"Lord! my dear, ~~why did~~ you not tell me you were going into the King's-road?" ~~cried~~ Lady Olivia. "I would have given you a commission to procure me some of that celebrated Chelsea lavender water; and I am sure your mother, with *her* delicate sight, would have been very glad of some rose-water;—how provoking!"

"Will you take some strawberries, my dear Frederica?" said Rawleigh, unexpectedly gratified by the removal of his park suspicions.

"Not any, I thank you," replied Lady Rawleigh, heroically.

"Some preserved ginger, then?"

"Not any, I am much obliged to you."

"A biscuit, Frederica?"

"I never eat biscuits."

"At least you will not refuse a glass of wine with me?" said Sir Brooke, in a tone which instantly overcame the air of magnanimous obduracy assumed by his wife. Frederica put the glass to her lips with a smile which said as plainly as smile could speak, "are you not ashamed of having suspected me unjustly?" She had at length detected the prejudice entertained by her husband against fashionable horse-womanahip!

"But why did you not tell me that you were unwilling to give up your daily ride?" said Sir Brooke, replying across the table to her very intelligible smile of interrogation. "Why deprive me of the happiness of conducting to your amusement by sending for Jessy?"

"I really believe you are jealous of Mameluke," said Frederica, smiling again as she rose to leave the dining-room with Lady Olivia. "I fancy I must make him a present to Launceston, to ease your apprehensions. Good bye! you

will find me in Charles-street, when you have finished y wine."

But to the disappointment of both ladies, Lady Olivia's carriage had not yet made its appearance; and her unladylike niece was only the more vexed at the prospect of a *forte-d-* when she found her ladyship obstinately bent on discovering the object of her drive with Mrs. William Erskyne. In a very short time, Lady Olivia's cross-examinations had worn out the whole secret of their visit to Monsieur Rochard, of Miss Elbany's mysterious miniature!

"My dear child! you overwhelm me with horror!" claimed the fussy aunt, when Frederica reached the climax of the history. "That girl,—a clergyman's orphan,—a needy adventurer,—throw away thirty guineas on a miniature!—Impossible!—Where is she to get such a sum?—trust you considered it your duty to lay the circumstances before Monsieur Rochard, and to inquire specifically where your brother has agreed to pay for the picture?"

"I consider it a far more urgent duty to guard poor Leicester's indiscretions from the inquisition of strangers; even had I been inclined to push my discoveries touching unaccountable miniature, the artist seemed to have received his lesson, and to be as secret as the grave."—

"Could we but prove there exists an understanding between them, of course your mother would no longer hesitate to turn this crafty companion of hers out of doors. It would really be a most important satisfaction on every account."

"On my brother's I admit; but believe me, Miss Elbany is much too cunning to have committed herself."

"I tell you what we will do, Frederica;—you have I been talking of presenting your own portrait to my sister."

"I was anxious to sit to Mrs. Robertson, at the time of my marriage, but Sir Brooke would not hear of losing so many hours of my company; perhaps he might think differently now on the subject."

"Well, never mind Sir Brooke; he has nothing to do with the matter. But you must positively sit to Rochard;—constrive to get your mother and her companion to the house; look at your picture;—the mine will explode;—everything will go right;—Miss Elbany will be turned into the street—and my nephew unite himself with Mrs. Woodington, Woodington Park."

"I neither desire nor anticipate the fulfilment of these latter clauses; nor, to say the truth, would it be convenient to me to throw away so large a sum just now. I fear I must defer my *cadeau* to mamma till another season."

"Why you told me the other day that you had not yet found occasion to have recourse to your pin money! You have been married three-quarters of a year; and the horse you have so inconsiderately thought proper to buy, cost you only eighty pounds;—what *can* you have done, or rather what can you mean to do with the remaining two hundred and twenty?"

"Put it in the savings' bank of course," said Frederica ironically, for she was by no means anxious to acquaint so notorious a gossip as her aunt, Olivia with the private nature of her engagements respecting the opera-box.

"Well, then, I can *only* say that you show a very strange degree of apathy touching the honour and interests of your family! With a settlement of four hundred a-year pin money, I really think you might expend thirty, without any great stretch of generosity, in forwarding the welfare of your only brother."

Frederica, whose hand was by Nature as open as her heart, blushed to hear herself thus unjustly accused of penuriousness.—"If you thought my sitting to Rochard would be of any real advantage—" she began.

"Of great advantage,—of the very greatest!" cried her aunt. "I rejoice, my dear niece, to perceive that your mind is under the influence of rational argument,—that *my* representations have their due effect;—and as I must pass through Regent-street on my way to Professor Axiom's, I shall certainly step in, and make an appointment for your first sitting, —either for to-morrow, or the following day."

Lady Rawleigh saw that it was in vain to resist a project so obstinately determined by Lady Olivia. She knew of old the pertinacity of her ladyship's resolutions; and felt satisfied that had she even determined this sitting to take place in the fever-stricken cabin of Captain Mopsley's Scarmouth Castle, implicit obedience would have been the sole alternative. She was vexed, however, to find a further expenditure forced upon her incurrence; she was vexed to perceive that Sir Brooke, in spite of their tacit reconciliation, made no movement to leave the dining-room sooner than usual, in order to accompany her to Lady Launceston's;—she even fancied as she crossed the hall towards Lady Olivia's carriage, that she could hear him *snore*!—and that he could sleep, and sleep profoundly too, so shortly after the first *éclaircissement* of their first misunderstanding, was a bitter aggravation of her woes! Lady Rawleigh found herself ascending her mother's staircase, with a persuasion that all which Milton, and Dr.

Johnson, and other literary miscreants, have been pleased to utter touching the evils of the marriage state, falls very short of the afflictions poured forth from the vials of wrath upon its modern victims! Forgetting for a moment the importunate officiousness of the companion, she longed to weep away her heaviness by her mother's side, and expatiate in the luxury of wo with as little delay as possible, in order that her eyes might recover their pristine brilliancy in time to grace the brilliant saloons of Suffolk House.

It may be observed of women, in all conditions of life, that however promoted by marriage above their former condition,—however magnificent the roof destined to shelter their matronly maturity, home—the old familiar house of their girlhood—never forfeits its spell over their hearts as an unfailing city of refuge. Its “ancient most domestic furniture,” is invested with a species of holiness in their eyes;—its viands have a familiarity of flavour never acquired by the dainties of a more splendid *menu*;—its sights—its sounds—its associations—have a stronger bend upon the affections than can belong to any future residence. *There*, where their innocent hearts,—scorning all evidence of the hollowness and evil of the world as arising from misanthropic testimony—delighted of old to indulge in the vision of human perfectibility, of mutual love, of goodness elevated above the touch of earthly passion, of virtue fixed beyond the influence of circumstances;—*there*, where their souls were entranced into a rapture of devotion unsullied by mortal transgressions, unalloyed by shame, unwedded to earth by the vulgar cares of venal interest;—*there*, even *there*, do they flee in their domestic afflictions, for a respite from trouble and anxiety. Like the dove of the deluge, they are driven back to their ark by the turmoil and strife of the wide ocean of the world.

Lady Launceston, as was usual with her on her days of indisposition, those days which were of far more than red-letter recurrence in her valetudinarian calendar,—was in her dressing-room; and Frederica remembered, as she approached the familiar door, the joy with which, on her holiday-release from the school-room, awful with its charts of ancient and modern history hanging from black rollers on the wall, she had been wont to fly to the gentle fostering love of her mother, to be petted with peppermint-drops and Tolu lozenges;—and with which, in her maturer days, she used to creep in with one of Andrew's marble-covered third volumes in her hand with a promise “not to interrupt mamma,” but with an intention, duly fulfilled, of pouring forth all her girlish tribu-

lations of the rivalry of Laura Mapleberry, or of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's ill-natured predilection for the driving-seat. She recollected, with a thrill of love, the cherishing softness of her mother's hand as it lingered on her shoulder, or reprovingly patted her cheek;—even the vapour of ether which habitually tinged any atmosphere frequented by the hypochondriac Lady Launceston, had a peculiar charm to her senses as associated with that intercourse of filial affection so sacred to her heart.

It was with feelings attuned by consciousness such as this, that Lady Rawleigh carefully turned the handle of the dressing-room door, that she might steal to her mother's side, and console herself as of old. When lo!—a sight presented itself to her swimming eyes, which Niobized her warm heart in a moment!—

Extended on a sofa, with her feet covered as usual with an eider-down quilt, lay Lady Launceston!—her Mechlin cap plaited with its usual nicety round her pale face!—The reader, I perceive, is becoming agitated, anticipates a terrible catastrophe,—sudden death, or at the very least a fainting fit;—but Lady Olivia Tadcaster's information on the subject may be implicitly relied on;—her sister was precisely in the same state of health which had kept her in a sort of chicken-broth convalescence for five-and-twenty years.—What then was the motive of the universal tremor which suddenly arrested the steps of Frederica on entering the dressing-room?—What hideous spectacle presented itself to her eyes?

On a low stool beside Lady Launceston's couch sat Miss Elbany, with her head familiarly reclining against the pillow of her patroness; whose thin delicate hand was fondling the cheek of the presumptuous hireling, with precisely the same gentle tenderness she had been wont to bestow upon her own daughter. Poor Frederica!—The hallowed dream of eighteen years vanished from around her;—she saw—she felt—she knew—that she was superseded in her mother's affections!—

Willingly would she have withdrawn herself from the chamber, to give a free course to her tears elsewhere; but the sound of the deep sigh which burst from the depths of her heart, arrested the attention of the self-sufficing pair.

"Oh! here is Lady Rawleigh," cried Miss Elbany, in the tone of common-place recognition, which conveys a total want of interest in the subject; and she rose from her foot-stool and wheedling attitude, to resume the habits of her vocation and place a chair for the new comer.

"I did not expect to see you this evening, my dear," said



Lady Launceston, with the negligent ease of a mother, who knows her daughter to be surrounded in her new home with all the temporal blessings of life, as well as by the fervent affection of her husband. "I thought you would scarcely have time to look in before you dressed for Suffolk House."

Frederica had too much feminine pride and constancy not to subdue the emotions struggling in her bosom, and that aching pain in her throat which seemed to impede her respiration. "Hearing from my aunt Olivia, who dined in Bruton-street, that you were indisposed, I hastened hither to inquire after you," faltered the deeply mortified daughter.

"Thank you, my dear love,—thank you," said Lady Launceston, wholly unconscious of the pain she was inflicting, "but you need never be uneasy on my account. Lucy is so very attentive,—so kind,—and so perfectly understands the management of a case like mine, that I am becoming independent both of my friends and medical attendants."

"Friends!" refrigerated into the comprehensive class of her mother's friends!—Joined with the multitude of Lady Smiths and Mrs. Williamses, who were in the habit of sending their compliments, and begging to know "how Lady Launceston finds herself this morning."—Poor Frederica!

"—And when your brother ascertained that my sister Olivia did not dine here, *he* was good-natured enough to stay and eat an impromptu cutlet. I am expecting him up from the dining-room every moment. Ah! there he is on the stairs,—he is the only person in the house who ever takes two steps at a time.—Miss Elbany, my dear, ring for coffee!"

Well did Frederica recollect the time when nothing would have induced Lord Launceston to take a cup of coffee in his mother's dressing-room; which he was accustomed to call the temple of Esculapius, and to fancy impregnated his coat with the flavour of camphor!

## CHAPTER XI.

When jewels are sparkling around me,  
And dazzling with their rays,  
I weep for the ties that bound me  
In life's first early days ;  
I sigh for one of the sunny hours  
Ere day was turned to night,  
For one of my nosegays of fresh wild flowers,  
Instead of those jewels bright.

MRS. HORTON.

If the excitement of gratified vanity could have sufficed to atone to Lady Rawleigh that happy ease of a contented heart with which she arrived in London, all might have been well. As Frederica Rawdon, she had never passed for what called "a beauty;" no peculiarities of dress or address had attracted the attention of the public towards the tranquillity of her countenance, or the unpretending grace of person; no reputation for miraculous accomplishments, notoriety of flippant wit, had startled the attention of society into an acknowledgment of her charms. But as the wife of Sir Brooke Rawleigh of Rawleighford, with her diamonds, her chariot by Adams, and her definite position in the world as a squires of some eight or ten thousand a-year, became an angel at once!

Younger brothers might now dangle after her from party ball, from park to opera, without any fear that a vigilant person, a Lady Olivia Tadcaster, should inquire into their intentions and frown away their homage. Noblemen with good rent-rolls, and captains in the guards with no rent at all, no longer considered themselves debarred from the delightful privilege of seeking her mantle among those miscellaneous heaps of female habiliments, which of the vile necessities of a climate between the tropic and the North Pole nightly amasses in ball-giving London. She was now approachable by married and single,—available and detrimental; and whereas a woman who regards the whole mass of fashionable society with the equalizing

eye of indifference, is much more at her ease and much more capable of rendering herself generally agreeable, than the coquette whose eye is ever on the watch to catch the attention of the Duke of D——, or than the flirt whose still worse-governed feelings blind her to the presence of all mankind, saving some boy-captain of the blues who hovers round her chair,—Frederica soon became one of the most admired and popular beauties of the day. The dowager Lady H. pronounced her to be a model of good breeding,—her ladyship's son declared her to be as lovely as a Houri,—Lord A. eulogized the easy and original tone of her conversation, and Colonel C. asserted that her dress was perfectly Parisian. It would be a libel upon female nature to say that Lady Rawleigh was wholly insensible to these triumphs. For her own share of the distinction thus achieved, she enjoyed it with as much moderation as Lady Grace in the play; but when it glanced across her mind that Sir Brooke might perhaps become less addicted to dining in boots, and to running after Mr. Lexley, if he saw her the object of universal idolatry, she permitted her lips to relax into smiles far oftener than the sensation of her heart suggested; and even with the feverish spot still burning on her cheek which had been branded there by the spectacle of her mother's exaggerated tenderness toward the companion, became the observed of all observers, the leading star of the brilliant assemblage at Suffolk House.—Radiant with jewels, and enhanced in beauty by all the auxiliaries of the toilet, she felt how much her sighs would be misplaced amid that smiling, sparkling, heartless, soulless crowd, with whose moral or immoral contentions her gentle nature was so little fitted to struggle!

On their entrance into the picture-gallery, Sir Brooke suddenly deserted her side, to go and talk county politics with a little knot of heroes of the middle age, distinguished by much hair-powder and much prose; and Frederica, who in common with the rest of her sex and caste, felt that pauperism and emigration were quite sufficiently discussed in the much-enduring ears of Parliament, and the long-enduring pages of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, had very little patience with his defection upon so small a temptation.

Unluckily for Rawleigh, Lord Calder seized this opportunity to plant himself by the side of the fair and deserted Ariadne; and by his graceful courtesies, and that varied flow of conversation so perfect in its tone—so potent upon the interest of his auditors—by which he was enabled to augment

at will the host of his votaries, he thoroughly captivated her attention, so that she not only forgot the desertion of Sir Brooke, but all her angry preventions against himself:—before they parted, Frederica actually promised to join his lordship's supper-party on the following Tuesday! A few minutes afterwards, her husband—who with difficulty extricated himself from the group of political economists, by whom his first and third buttons had been argued off his coat,—returned to persuade her that she was fatigued, and anxious to go home; and on the whole, her evening might have terminated agreeably, had they not been detained five minutes in the vestibule, waiting for their carriage to stop the way. Frederica was now eagerly attacked by Mrs. William Erskyne, whom they found detained by a similar dilemma.

"Dearest Fred.—I have been dying to speak to you all the evening; but I entertain too much value for your regard to interrupt that long and tremendous flirtation with Lord Calder. I *did* hazard to touch you once or twice on the arm, when I recollected that to-morrow is not our night for the Opera, and that I shall not see you till Wednesday;—but you were lending too anxious an ear to his lordship's whispers to notice my importunity."

"And what is the nature of your urgent communication?" inquired Frederica coldly, for she was vexed that her husband should be misled by so idle a misrepresentation of the fact.

"Oh! nothing of the least importance to *you*; nothing at all worthy to break off a tête-à-tête with a man of Lord Calder's fashion. I want you to take me to Almack's on Wednesday; for I shall come back late from the races, and find nothing but tired servants, and a husband angry with the aspect of his book. Will you be so charitable?"

"Willingly;—on condition that if you feel inclined to stay late, you will find some other person to take you home. My coiffeur has appointed such a very early hour on Thursday morning that—"

"You are going to the drawing-room?" interrupted Mrs. Erskyne, with a most courteous incivility. "Then why bore yourself with Almack's at all,—to get up after three hours feverish sleep with hollow eyes and pallid cheek?—Positively Frederica, you are growing an ultra rake; and dissipation itself shall be a plummet over you. Cannot you make up your mind to renounce a single ball?"

"No, indeed!"—cried Lady Rawleigh, piqued by the sar-

casms of her friend, and the conjugal *grout* with which they were echoed by Sir Brooke, into an affectation of obstinacy foreign to her nature. "I should grieve over a lost Almack's, like the Roman emperor over his anti-beneficent day. Depend on me, therefore, for Wednesday night,—and *bon soir*!"

As she was hurried by Sir Brooke through a mob of footmen towards her carriage, Lady Rawleigh began to anticipate the annoyance of a sullen tête-à-tête on their homeward drive;—nor was she disappointed! Her husband pulled his shapeless opera-hat over his face, and began to describe circles and all manner of geometrical problems with the point of his well-varnished shoe upon the front of the chariot, with an evident determination to be silent and sulky. He was wrong!—If men were aware of the effect they produce in those nightcaps of black felt,—tired, and haggard, and dusty, as seen through the lurid atmosphere of a London morning twilight,—they would never select that untimely moment for a touch of the heroics!—

"Perhaps it may do him good to ruminate on Louisa's representations," thought the drowsy wife; as on her arriving in her Bruton-street dressing-room, she resigned herself to Mrs. Pasley's hands, to have handfuls of her fine hair uprooted in the process of being unfripped for the night. And with every tug inflicted by the victim who had been kept sleepless till daylight to officiate in the operation, her resolution became strengthened to overcome her husband's old-fashioned prejudices, and make her own value evident in his eyes by an unreserved intercourse with the great world, and its flatteries.

"We have been admonished by the royal philosopher of the Jews, that the sun should not go down upon our wrath;—but had Solomon penetrated half the mysteries of the female breast, he would have additionally interdicted a sunset upon our *coolness*!—Anger is of brief endurance, and soon raves itself to rest; but coolness is as long-lived as other cold-blooded animals:—it is as the toad which exists for a thousand years in the heart of a rock! Were I, like Dr. Gregory and other moral tacticians, to bequeath a legacy of counsel to my daughters, I would say, "Never sleep upon a misunderstanding with those you love;—if you feel less kindly towards them than usual, the chances run that you are in the wrong."

This truth was very painfully manifested to Lady Rawleigh when, at nine o'clock in the following morning, Mr. Lexley made his appearance at the door in a travelling-car-

riage,—not on his road to Hampton, but to Martwich; and succeeded in persuading her husband, who gave him audience in his dressing-gown, to become the companion of his journey. Something had occurred to traverse the election which rendered their presence necessary; and after scalding his mouth with a cup of instantaneous tea, and disgusting himself with a half-boiled egg, the unshorn candidate for parliamentary honours uttered a hurried farewell to his wife, a parting charge to Martin, and jumped into the carriage which was to convey him from his distempered home to his disorganized borough. Frederica beheld his departure from her bed-room window; and when she saw the dressing-case enveloped in its travelling baize shoved into the chaise by Martin, and placed at the feet of Sir Brooke, it did most bitterly repent her that she had not on the preceding evening explained away the ill-natured observations of Mrs. Erskyne, and acquainted him with her engagement to Lord Calder. She took refuge on her pillow against her own reflections;—and had the comfort of dreaming them away till one o'clock, when she was roused by Pasley with her cup of chocolate, and had the vexation to behold the face of Lady Olivia Tadcaster peeping over her maid's shoulder.

"Not up yet, my love!—what shocking habits!—If you indulge yourself in this manner at *your* age, Frederica, what will you be at mine!—a poor fragile creature, nourished upon sal-volatile, like your mother."

"We stayed rather late at Suffolk House."

"No wonder!—you did not make your appearance there till *I* and every reasonable being had taken leave. *I* was there as soon as the candles were lighted; and *I* was consequently enabled to rise this morning at eight. I hired a footman and laundry-maid for my cousin Wingfield in Yorkshire, breakfasted, settled my accounts, and read half a volume of Nares's *Life of Burghley* (which I chose, because it was the thickest book in Sams's library) before nine; and I have since driven with Mrs. Woodington as far as Hackney, to look for a *Droconia* to present to Lady Huntingfield on her birth-day. By the way I met Rawleigh, with post-horses in a strange carriage, near the second milestone!"

"I am sorry to say he has been obliged to go down into Cambridgeshire about this odious electioneering business."

"Pray, my dear, do not indulge in such an abuse of language.—Electioneering!—call it borough-mongering at once."

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"The name is nothing, compared with the annoyance of Sir Brooke's departure, for which I was quite unprepared."

"Unprepared?—you are as silly as your mother, whom I left just now *preparing* herself with saline draughts for a cold, which she protests is hovering over her!—For my part, I am very glad Rawleigh is gone; it will leave us ample leisure for the miniature, and you are to sit to-day at three o'clock."

"I am almost sorry I have undertaken the fatigue just now. At this season of the year one is worried to death by engagements; or rather to a state of feverish frightfulness, worse than death to a woman."

"In the first place, this season of the year happens to be the only season when reasonable beings are to be found in London;—and, in the next place, *you* my dear who talk of engagements, are the idlest, the most-do-nothing of human beings.—I will not call you the '*wed*' but the Iris of Lethe's wharf."

"Do not call me any names," said Frederica, languidly; "for I am out of spirits, or out of sorts, or whatever polite term is just now in vogue for being out of temper."

"You—my dear child!—why what can you—the spoiled child of fortune and affection—have to vex you?—Have you seen a newer pattern for diamond girandoles than your own, —or has Giradot chosen an unbecoming shade of green for your train? Poor soul!"

"You do right to laugh at me; for I own I have little pretext for murmuring against Providence. Nevertheless, I am deeply mortified by Launceston's proceedings, and at the countenance with which they are sanctioned by mamma. As we predicted, I found him dining in Charles-street last night; and the hour I passed there was enlivened by Miss Elbany's performances on the harp; and by my brother's *persiflage* respecting 'Rawleigh's objections to my riding, Rawleigh's dread of my independence, and Rawleigh's anxiety to put me in leading-strings to Aunt Martha Derenzy.' Sir Brooke *may* have faults,—I do not uphold him as a monster of a paragon;—but I think it extremely unkind on Launceston's part to expose them to ridicule for the amusement of that odious girl,—a stranger to the family,—and a very unfit person to be intrusted with its secrets."

"Depend on it, my dear, she is far too deeply occupied with her own secrets to care about yours. Did William pay her much attention?"

"I cannot say he did; but everything wore a much worse

aspect. They appeared to understand each other perfectly, and to be upon the happiest terms of confidential intimacy."

"They are certainly engaged!" cried Lady Olivia, falling back in her chair with a severe concussion. "My poor, dear, infatuated sister!—my poor, dear, obstinate, ill-fated nephew!—the ancient House of Trevelyan,—the unsullied name of Rawdon!"

"Nay, dear aunt, I have no reason to think the evil so far advanced."

"Irrevocable, irrecoverable, irremediable ruin!" cried Lady Olivia, searching into the heterogeneous contents of the steel-embroidered ginecière for her handkerchief, to conceal an imaginary burst of tears. "I, Frederica, who am in the secret of all my nephew's embarrassments,—who have sat hour after hour upon a mahogany stool in a little dusty cupboard in Lincoln's-inn, filing off his unpaid bills on iron skewers, lest his solicitor should audit them with an imperfect scrutiny;—I, who have insured his life in half the offices in London, for the better security of his annuities;—I, who have his rent-roll by heart, and the list of its mortgages by head;—I, my dear Lady Rawleigh, am able to appreciate all the horror, all the ruin, all the wickedness of this abominable connexion!"

"When I reflect," said her niece, "that this unfortunate person represents herself as a clergyman's daughter—"

"*Unfortunate!*—I wish we may none of us have worse luck!—and a *clergyman's daughter*. My dear, that is a regular companion-and-governess advertisement trap!—What sort of a clergyman do you suppose Miss Elbany's father to have been?—a respectable incumbent of a respectable vicarage like your own Dr. Jackson?—No, no!—some reverend divine such as those I saw in smock-frocks selling char among the Westmoreland lakes; and preaching on Sundays in thatched churches, large enough to hold twelve persons without much squeezing."

"But those were Sectarians."

"As regularly ordained Church of England divines as any in the diocese!—Elbany—Elbany? I once had a hosier of that name, who lived in Holborn, and sold the best fleecy hosiery I ever used. Poor, dear Mr. Tadcaster used to swear by it in his fits of the rheumatism."

Frederica perfectly well remembered who it was Mr. Tadcaster used to swear *at* in his fits of the rheumatism.

"I have no doubt he was her uncle!" mused Lady Olivia.

"Because you expect to be her aunt?" said Lady Raw-



leigh, blundering on poor Mr. Tadcaster as the antecedent of the pronoun. "Nay!—you may dismiss your fears on that head; it is not my apprehension that Launceston will make my mother's companion his *wife*, which disgusts me with his conduct; for you must allow me to explain to you (in strict confidence) that he is engaged to marry another person."

"How!—you amaze me!—worse and worse! Ten to one there will be the damages of a breach-of-promise action to be provided for!"

"No!—in spite of the ill-judged attentions which Launceston allows himself to pay the girl mamma has so foolishly thrown in his way, I am persuaded he is sincerely attached to Leonora Waddlestone."

"Leonora who?" exclaimed Lady Olivia, half rising from her chair.

"Alas! my dear aunt! I grieve to mortify you by such humiliating intelligence; but William is actually on the point of marriage with a soapboiler's daughter."

"A what!—" panted the agonized aunt.

"With the only daughter of Mr. Waddlestone, an eminent soapboiler."

"Of Waddlestone House?"

Lady Rawleigh nodded assent.

"*Viva! Viva!*"—cried Lady Olivia, clapping her hands, and starting from her seat. "My *dear* Launceston!—my own dear William!—my godson!—my favourite nephew!—I always said he would live to be an ornament to his family; I always knew he would distinguish himself. Frederica—Frederica! why did you never set me at ease on this point before? I will go directly to my sister's, and make an apology to Miss Elbany for all my rudeness;—I will—"

"Pardon me if I trust you will take no steps in consequence of what I have communicated. I am under a promise to Launceston not to mention the subject to mamma; and although you were not exactly specified in the agreement, I have every reason to suppose he wishes the affair to be kept a secret in the family."

"In order that he may carry on his silly flirtation with poor Lucy?"

"Let us think better of him. But tell me, my dear aunt, you who were so scandalized at the notion of his marriage with a hosier's niece, what can you see to enchant you in his union with—"

"The heiress of one of the wealthiest men in England!—Everything!—You will find my dear Fred. that in this na-

a *boutiquière*, a little city gold becomes necessary once in a century to assist in emblazoning the escutcheon, where there is neither a coal-pit nor a lead-mine on the family estate, to pay off the fortunes of the younger children, and the jointures of dowagers. Why there is young Tadcaster, my nephew! He has every prospect of paying me three thousand a-year for forty—or say five forty years to come!—a hundred and eighty thousand pounds! His estate is barely five—Irish tancy;—so you see he *must* marry an heiress!

“But there are heiresses who are not daughters to soap-boilers.”

“Not such heiresses as Miss Waddlestone; who has a hundred thousand pounds in ready money, and five hundred thousand more on the death of the father!—Think of that, my dear!—think of poor dear old Marston Park with all its encumbrances paid off;—think of—”

“I would rather not think of any advantage achieved by such very unsatisfactory means.”

“Folly!—absurdity!—mere narrowness of mind;—intellectual people are above such obsolete prejudices! Had my brother offered himself and his encumbered estates to any young woman of good family as well as of good fortune, his pretensions would have been enormous. Her father would have stifled us with parchments, and demanded a settlement of jointure and pin money—”

(Frederica sighed.)

“Enough to beggar a duke!—But with a soapboiler the affair is quite different—quite a matter of traffic and barter—tare and tret;—pedigree against pence,—pounds against preface. Not that I should have ever recommended you, Frederica, to marry a soapboiler.—The wife necessarily descends to her husband’s condition, and an Honourable Mrs.—or even a Lady Frederica Waddlestone, must remain a nobody for life; while Lady Launceston assumes at once your brother’s pretensions, and it matters very little, except to the compilers of the peerage, by what patronymic she was ushered into the world.”

“I wish it had been anything but Waddlestone,” sighed Frederica, putting the finishing stroke to her toilet—which she had been proceeding in the interim—in the form of an emerald buckle encircled with dragons and birds of paradise.

“Mr. Waddlestone is one of the most enlightened men in England!” cried Lady Olivia. “When I was at Rome the only occupied part of my hotel, and his antechamber was—”

crowded with virtuosi and dilettanti, like that of an ambassador. He swept every studio and atelier in the place; and Milor Vatilsdon became as well known in Italy as Napoleon."

"But the mother—the odious mother!"

"Is she still alive!—alas! alas!—But a man does not marry his mother-in-law."

"Mrs. Woodington in the drawing-room, my lady," said Mrs. Pasley, throwing open the door in some vexation that her mistress had thought proper to exclude her from the mysteries of the toilet.

"How could they admit that woman! She is my utter aversion," cried Lady Rawleigh.

"And mine too, now that she no longer suits my plans for Launceston. However, my dear Fred., there is no occasion to let *her* know that her hopes are over, for the poor silly little creature would break her heart; and between ourselves, she has supplied me with pines and peaches from Woodington Park all the season, by way of propitiating your brother's relations. Good-bye, my dear,—I shall meet you at Rochard's at three. In the meantime, I must go and leave my name at Kensington Gore upon my old friends the Waddlestones;—one cannot be too prompt in one's civilities on such occasions."

## CHAPTER XII.

There's na luck about the house,  
 There's na luck at a'  
 There's little pleasure in the house  
 When my good man's awa.

BURNS.

It is a well-known necessity in the modern annals of our English constitution (both physical and political), that a man must eat his way into Parliament; and while Sir Brooke Rawleigh was enduring the unctuosities of a dinner at the Black Bull at Martwich,—seasoned by the pungent varieties of twelve cockle-shell saucers of pickles of divers colours by way of *hors d'œuvres*,—by a tumult of blanc mange with a nosegay in its bosom by way of centre to a very miscellaneous second course,—as well as by the presence of Mr. Amos Robson and Mr. Jeremiah Jobson (two gentlemen in corduroys, deeply implicated in the interests of the borough, whom Mr. Lexley called “my good friends,” and “these influential gentlemen,” every second minute),—Frederica,—“not at home to any one,”—was indulging in all the ruminative misery of her first widowhood; having dismissed the untouched dinner-tray, and wrapt her roquelaure around her in the easy chair of her dressing-room.

In her hand was a volume of one of Madame de Souza's most touching novels; on the little marble table by her side was a scented taper, casting its pale reflection upon a bouquet of Colville's freshest roses; at her feet the velvet ottoman brought home by Lord Launceston from his Turkish travels; behind her head the cambric pillow embroidered with her own initials by her mother's hand. She looked the very picture of voluptuous indolence,—luxurious ease; and had Richard seen her in that attitude, with the scattered tresses of her raven hair entangled round her beautiful hand and wrist, he would have presented a fairer Lady Rawleigh to the admiration of posterity, than could be hoped from the formal model she had afforded with her locks tortured by a French hair-dresser, and her robe primly adjusted after the latest fiat of Victorine!

But, alas ! the ease of Frederica's position was wholly extrinsic. In spite of the lustrous taper, her soul was dark as that of Sampson Agonistes ;—in spite of the air-stuffed cushions in which she was buoyantly embedded, her frame appeared encircled by one of the compressive engines of the Inquisition ;—and had she swallowed all the *hors d'œuvres* of the Martwich dinner, her feelings could not have been more acidulated against herself and all mankind.

After her morning's endurance of nearly an hour of Mrs. Woodington's toadyism, which she longed to curtail by a simple statement that Lord Launceston's hand was already bespoken, Frederica found it necessary to prepare for the miniature ; and the mere necessity of enduring all the martyrdom of full dress at three o'clock on a summer's day, is in itself a bitter trial of human patience. But when she found herself actually seated to be examined by the curious eye of art with the full glare of a May sunshine beaming on her face, while Lady Olivia, who could not be contented to absent herself from the first sitting, fidgeted up and down, tormenting the artist with advice, and her niece with comments which she dared not derange her features by answering with proper spirit, her heart was sickened with petty irritations. Although Lady Olivia no longer cared a straw whether Miss Elbany chose to sit for a hundred and fifty pictures, or even whether her nephew chose to render himself responsible for their cost, yet such was her inquisitiveness that she tortured her niece by her ill-bred mode of pushing her inquiries on a point which so little seemed to concern her ; and Lady Rawleigh sincerely rejoiced when her hour of penance was at an end, and Monsieur Rochard bowed her signal of release.

"Is Storr your jeweller, my dear ?" said her aunt, as they stepped into the carriage ; and upon Lady Rawleigh's affirmative, Lady Olivia gave orders that they should be driven to Bond-street.

"You must not ask me to get out," said Frederica ; "I was in hopes we were going straight home, that I might put on my morning-dress."

"Enveloped in your mantle, no one perceives your evening costume ; and I will lend you *my* veil," said the merciless Lady Olivia, throwing over the beautiful head of her companion a white web, whose consistency might have served on an exigency for a tablecloth, but which called itself British lace. "You must not refuse me the gratification of seeing you choose a setting for these," she continued,—

taking out a little box pestiferous with musk, containing a set of Roman Mosaics large enough to have decorated the Lord Mayor's state harness. "I flatter myself they are particularly fine;—they were chosen for me by my poor dear friend Cardinal Gonsalvi, and I *had* always intended them as a cadeau for Launceston's bride; but since he is to marry a daughter of Mr. Waddlestone, I might just as well offer *her* a necklace of walnut-shells."

"But surely we had better defer our visit to Storr and Mortimer's till a more convenient opportunity," said Lady Rawleigh, who looked upon Mosaics as much fitter for the Museum than the jewel-box, but who was unwilling to offend her aunt by declining so handsome a gift.

"No time like the present!" said her ladyship, bustling out of the carriage, and waiting anxiously on the stairs of the show-room, till she saw herself followed by her niece; and in a moment a tempting variety of beautiful settings was extended upon the counter for their selection, which Frederica at first modestly left to the determination of the donor. But in the course of the discussion upon filigree and Gothic, mated gold and embossed, she discovered that, although the Mosaics were a gift from her aunt, her *own* jeweller had been pointedly selected, that she might order the mounting at her own expense; and although she profited by this very unsatisfactory discovery to choose the least costly mode of rendering the unwelcome present available, Lady Rawleigh dared not indulge her inclination and declare the Roman valuables which she had politely accepted as beautiful, to be in truth the most hideous things in the world!

But her misfortunes did not end here. While she was determining the shape of the comb, which was to be surmounted with views of the Coliseum,—of the temples at Pæstum,—and the amphitheatre of Verona—(a portable abridgment of Piranesi)—she heard the voice of Lord Calder at the opposite counter, reproving the delay of his order for a set of malachite handled knives and forks; and felt that her project of excusing herself from attending his supper-party that night, on the plea of indisposition, was now out of the question. Even her momentary hope of escaping his lordship's notice in an area so contracted, was lost when Mrs. William Erskyne, flying up the stairs, rushed towards her.

"Fred.—my dear love, I saw your carriage waiting, and am just come to tell you that I have made a most delightful party for the races on Friday. I have engaged horses in your name and mine:—it is only ten guineas, and I know

you are as rich as Rothschild.—But why are you *en masquerade* this morning?"

"Hush! hush!—I have been sitting for my picture. But do not let me detain you;—I really cannot join your party on Friday,—I will explain to you why."

"No, no!—I want no explanations—I never listen to them,—mere *fihs en habit de cour*! I have made up my mind to have you, and never allow myself to be disappointed;—good-bye!—Good morning, Mr. Storr!—what put it into your head to send in my bill!—I have not the least idea of paying it."

"Whenever you please, Madam," said the civil jeweller, too well accustomed to the caprice of fine ladies to be annoyed by her impertinent folly; while Lord Calder, advancing towards the discomfited Frederica, addressed the most gracious compliments to her upon the confession he had overheard respecting her portrait; and upon the assurance he received from her appearance not only that the picture would be taken at an auspicious moment, but that he might hope for the pleasure of her company at Calder House that night.

There appeared no alternative but acquiescence; and having gladly escaped from further observation by hastily terminating her commission, Frederica threw herself into a corner of the carriage, completely out of humour. From Lady Olivia, however, she received nothing but congratulations on Lord Calder's flattering demeanour. Her ladyship had long regarded with profound reverence his manifold virtues;—from the power of granting government franks, to the presidency over the most magnificent establishment in the three kingdoms of Great Britain. The merits of his Italian conffectioner alone would have sufficed to ensure her unalterable respect.

But Frederica was neither born interested, nor had achieved interestedness; her mind was yet undegraded by those cares of vulgar life which spring from the bills of many a Christmas, and like certain baleful weeds which wind round some plant till they crush it into extinction,—destroy all the finer impulses of a noble nature. Reared in the lap of prosperity, she had scarcely come in contact with the words "income, allowance, expenditure, debt, credit, or creditor;" even the embarrassments of her brother were on too wholesale a scale to give her the slightest notion that a sovereign was composed of only twenty shillings. She knew that between rich and poor there existed an awful discrepancy; but of the facility with which the rich *become* poor, or the humiliations

arising from pecuniary distress—she entertained a vague and shadowy conception. Even among the uneasy meditations of her easy chair, when she was summoning around her every painful image at her command, she very slightly reminded herself that she had expended eighty pounds on a horse, seventy on a fountain, a hundred on an opera box, besides a considerable sum for the court-dress and the mosaic necklace; believing that four hundred pounds in pin-money would not only handsomely cover the amount of these expenses and of the miniature, but would leave her, according to her mental calculations, a very satisfactory balance to fulfil her usual charities at Rawleighford.

Very different and far less consolatory were the moral reflections which kept the volume of “*Adèle de Sénanges*” unopened in her hand!—Sir Brooke was gone,—gone for the first time,—gone with a filmy veil of mutual dissatisfaction still unremoved from between their affection;—gone upon a contemptible errand of bribing his way into Parliament;—gone with that hard ungainly mass of human insensibility, Mr. Lexley;—gone nominally for four days,—and virtually for as many more as it might suit his truant fancy to determine. And how was she about to beguile the period of his absence,—his first absence,—his confiding absence? By engaging herself in a society which she knew he must disapprove,—by visiting Calder House for the first time unsanctioned by the support of her husband!—Twice she rose and seized the embossed blotting-book (that prettiest of Harding’s importations), and twice she dipped her agate pen into the back of the silver tortoise which graced her writing-table, to write an excuse. But what could she say in such an emergency?—Another engagement was negatived by her original acceptance of the invitation; and pretended indisposition was rendered impossible by her morning’s encounter. Already she foresaw the sneers of Mrs. William Erskyne, who had witnessed the engagement, and would readily detect the motive of its infringement, on her prudish timidity;—already she anticipated the reproaches of her aunt Tadcaster upon her indifference towards the maintenance of a good connexion in society;—and when at length Mrs. Pasley, after a professional tap at the door, ushered in the Figaro of the day bearing a garland of such wheat-ears as were never beheld saving in a Dunstable cornfield, or Nattier’s *magazin*, while the lady’s maid assiduously lighted the tapers on the dressing-table, Frederica threw aside her pen and Madame de Souza with an air of self-resignation becoming a martyr; nor



allowed one smile to irradiate her lovely face when she beheld it surrounded with aerial curls, illuminated by the reflection of her diamond earrings, and enhanced by a flowing robe whose satin foldings would have rejoiced the courtly pencil of Vandyke.

There was just one shade of care lingering upon her brow, as she ascended the princely staircase at Calder House; which, unlike the laboured decorations of a Mrs. Luttrell, assumed nothing more than its ordinary character of refined magnificence.—It was neither divested with penurious housewifery of its Persian carpeting, nor embowered with temporary verdure;—the antique statues gracing its niches were permanent, and the bronze lamps displaying their classic beauties, of nightly illumination. Frederica concluded that she had been preceded by the groom of the chambers; for she was met in one of the first chambers of the suite by Lord Calder himself, who led her forward to the saloon in which his guests were assembled. For a moment she fancied that there was something rather too much resembling an *air de prince* in the tone of his reception; but when he had placed her in a fauteuil in the most advantageous position for hearing the concert now about to commence, and stood beside her listening with deferential attention to her flattering comments, she began to think that if Lord Calder were as grandiose in his address as Louis XIV., he was quite as courteous, and far more entertaining;—and to determine that one of her first studies should be to get rid of that *mauvaise honte* which rendered her conversation so unworthy the pains he took to draw it forth.

It is surprising in how short a time the weariness which had previously oppressed the spirits of Lady Rawleigh, subsided under the influence of the thousand joyous sounds and sights by which she was now surrounded; and her heart became as much the lighter from its previous despondency, as the sun shines with a clearer radiance after the dispersion of its morning mist. After the lapse of two short hours she was tempted to acknowledge to herself that, in spite of her former prejudices, she had never found herself surrounded by society so faultlessly agreeable as that of Calder House. It is true she found none of her own immediate friends included in its fastidious circle,—from which her mother would have been rejected as insipid, her brother as a boor, her husband as a nonentity, and her aunt Tadcaster as the most insupportable of human bores. But all its sitting members were of the choicest fashion;—women just hovering on the verge of indis-

cretion, without having forfeited their reputation ;—and men incapable of uttering a word unworthy to be quoted, either for its eminent wit or miraculous absurdity. There was not a single person in that matchless coterie otherwise than superlatively gifted to conduce to the general gratification of eye or ear.

As soon as the distinguished notice bestowed by Lord Calder upon Frederica had pointed her out to be deserving the homage of society, Lady Rawleigh found herself smothered in incense. But it is not with those fragrant fumes first circling around us that we discover the paltry nature of the tribute ;—intoxicated by its grateful vapour, we become satisfied at once of our own divinity, and of the laudable devotion of our votaries ;—and time and experience alone render the unnatural atmosphere oppressive to our feelings. Lord Putney begged leave to present to her Mr. Vaux, the most fashionable wit of the day, who had long been ambitious of the honour of her acquaintance,—and poor Frederica ingenuously imagined that he had been attracted by the reputation of her talents ; while Lady Rochester, by her eager request to her brother Lord Calder, for an introduction to "*the beautiful* Lady Rawleigh," convinced her that all London was ringing with the fame of her charms. Meanwhile the following dialogue was carried on at her expense on the other side of the room.

"My dear Vaux !—who was that pretty creature whose vacant smiles you were trying to Pygmalionise into intelligence just now ?"

"Oh ! my Galatea is by no means so marble as she appears. She is the wife of some booby Baronet—some Warwickshire Squire,—who appears to have just sense enough to let her loose on society, without his stupid presence hung like a clog round her neck to keep her from ranging. Such people generally imagine that human beings are still expected to walk upon the earth in couples, like their own hounds ; or like the varnished wooden effigies of Mr. and Mrs. Japhet, in a Dutch Noah's Ark."

"And how did you coax your statue into humanity, and off its pedestal ?"

"I tell you 'tis no statue,—but a wood-nymph, a Warwickshire hamadryad ! As soon as I began to indulge her rustic predilections, and rodomontade to her about sunrise and sunset, '*rapid Vaga*,' and the Malvern hills, she talked as much poetry as would have furnished half-a-dozen very decent sonnets to the best Annual going. I expected every moment

she would invite me to botanize with her in Jenkin's conservatories, or take a stroll in Kensington Gardens; but I gave her to understand *I* was a *classique* rather than a *romantique*; and that my rheumatism preferred a vapour-bath to all the fountains of Helicon."

"I thought her lovely face became overclouded by a contemptuous frown while you were uttering your impertinences."

"Wrong—quite wrong—believe me;—the dear little creature is far from malicious!—I assure you she swallowed Lady Rochester's civilities as eagerly as if they had been candied by the Fidèle Berger."

"And what *could* Lady Rochester find to say to a sweet modest creature like that, on whom all the glaring audacity of her wit must have been so completely thrown away! *She* has not the least notion how to talk to a woman; and when repeating like a parrot or a starling the phrases addressed to herself, sometimes produces the most singular samples of conversation!"

"Her business with Lady Rawleigh was neither to talk nor to listen;—did you not detect the motive which induced her to sail across the room?"

"Like a yacht manœuvring at a regatta?—No indeed!—I saw her glass diligently applied to her eye."

"Poor soul!—she fancies that a woman's complexion is as extraneous as a man's coat; and on seeing a pretty person for the first time, instantly tries to detect whether her beauty is liquid or vegetable; bought at Lubin's, Delcroix's, or Bayley and Blew's. I have no doubt she fancies she has found out my goddess's secret, and has qualified herself to offer an exact copy of Lady Rawleigh to-morrow night at Almack's."

"As like as a crimson dahlia to a damask rose!—why cannot she paint after one of her own granddaughters!—Ah! I see the *débutante* has met with unqualified success;—Calder is taking her down to her carriage,—a thing I never saw him do to any one but the beautiful Duchess of Lancaster."

"I shall leave my name with her to-morrow, for I predict that she will make some stir among us. So much the better!—we were sadly in want of a new planet in this old solar system of ours. I suspect that our fixed stars, such as Lady Rochester, and Lady Waldington, Lady Blanche, and the duchess, will be compelled to hide their diminished heads in a total eclipse!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus.  
Another thing to fall!—

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

ON the following day, just as Frederica, after returning too late from Rochard's to change her dress and finish a letter to Sir Brooke in time for the post, had seated herself with hurried eagerness at her writing-table, in the full costume of her séance, Martin suddenly threw open the door of the drawing-room, and announced—"Lord Calder!"—The sapient Mr. Thomas had not chosen to conceive it possible that my lady's general fiat of exclusion could extend to that privileged mortal, who conducted her so familiarly to her carriage on the preceding night.

Frederica profiting by the leisurely pace at which she knew her dignified friend to be ascending the stairs, hastily exclaimed "How stupid!—I have letters to write for the post, and desired I might *on no account* be interrupted;" and accordingly when the attentive butler had closed the door upon his mistress and her importunate guest, he issued peremptory orders in the hall that "no person was to be admitted to my lady, not on no account whatsoever." Now Thomas, who had lived with a sufficient variety of capricious fine ladies to perfect his education, saw nothing unusual or remarkable in the order; but he proceeded to enforce it with so much exactness, that when Lord Launceston shortly afterwards knocked at the door—before which Calder's carriage and slumbering servants were leisurely drawn up—he was assured again and again, that Lady Rawleigh was "*not at home*."

Casting a suspicious glance at the sombre chariot,—which, although ungraced by a single emblazonment bespeaking the rank of its owner, was marked by the beauty of its horses, and the neatness of its appointments to belong to some person of high consideration,—to say nothing of the impudence

of the footman, whose cane and left leg were dangling over the corner of the dark green of the hammercloth with an air of defiance which plainly bespoke them to be appurtenances to an establishment of sixty or eighty thousand a-year,—Lord Launceston inquired to whom that equipage belonged.

"Really can't say, my lord:—but her ladyship is visible to nobody, on no account whatever."

Lord Launceston replied to this piece of impertinence by jumping off his horse, throwing the bridle to his informant, and walking deliberately into the house and up stairs; when, to his surprise and consternation, on entering the second drawing-room he found his sister, at five o'clock in the day, robed in white satin with her arms and shoulders in the full exposure of an evening toilet; while Lord Calder reposing in an opposite arm-chair, gazed upon her loveliness with unconcealed admiration. Unfortunately Lord Launceston had just a sufficient club-acquaintance with Frederica's noble guest, to render that introduction superfluous which might have disguised the embarrassment of the group; for the cold and even haughty bows which were exchanged between the gentlemen only tended to heighten the blushes and vexation of Lady Rawleigh, on being discovered in so singular a predicament by her brother during the absence of her husband.

"You may see by my dress that I have been following the fashion of all vain women, my dear Launceston," said she, attempting to laugh away her distress, "by sitting for my picture; but pray do not mention it to Rawleigh or mamma, for I intend that it should be an agreeable surprise.

"I should think it would probably be a *very* agreeable surprise to your husband," said Lord L., sarcastically. "I was not aware," bowing to Lord Calder, "that your lordship was a practitioner in the *fine arts*?"

"You do me too much honour, and greatly overrate my abilities," said his lordship, ~~deiding~~ from the loud voice and ungracious demeanour assumed by Lady Rawleigh's brother, that he was even a more uncouth savage than he had always appeared in the betting-stand at Ascot or Doncaster, or on the driving seat of his barouche. "I should indeed despair of conveying to others my own vivid impression of Lady Rawleigh's countenance; and am therefore disinterested enough to rejoice that she has selected the pencil of Rochar'd to perpetuate its present aspect."

"Rochar'd?" said Lord Launceston with an expressive glance of inquiry towards his sister. "How long has this

mysterious portrait been projected? I was at Rochard's myself a day or two ago, and did not hear a word of it."

"Oh, mysterious portraits are the order of the day," observed Frederica,—resuming her spirit, when she perceived the unnecessary air of harshness and authority assumed by her brother,—a harshness which her own perfect blamelessness strongly induced her to resent; "and I am determined not to tell you a single word about *my* picture, that I may ascertain whether I am as expert as yourself in keeping a secret."

"I never had a secret bad enough or good enough to be worth keeping," said Lord Launceston, with increasing asperity. "Mystery presupposes guilt;—a crape over the face is enough in itself to proclaim the plunderer or the assassin."

Lord Calder, perceiving from the tone and emphasis of the intrusive Launceston that his observations were intended to be personal, although—being ignorant of the suspicious negative his lordship had encountered at the door, he was wholly at a loss to what motive to attribute his intemperance of speech, nor attempted to change the character of the conversation, by generalizing this latter comment and flying off to the brigands of the south of Italy, and the obsolete highwaymen of Bagshot-heath. But notwithstanding the admirable humour with which he described his own traditional encounter with the celebrated Abershaw, while yet an infant lying on his lady-mother's knees, in the now familiar haunt of Park-lane,—notwithstanding his picturesque sketch of the manner in which the notorious band of Alzaretti deposited the murdered body of a Romagnese physician under the portico of the pope's palace on Monte-Cavallo towards the Strada Pia, during his own residence in Rome,—Lord Launceston was determined not to be entertained.—He sat listlessly rolling up the hearth-rug with his boot, as if his thoughts were wandering a thousand miles off.

At length Lord Calder, unused to find himself *de trop* in any society, rose to take leave. As he bent his low obeisance of farewell to Frederica, he observed half interrogatively, "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-night at Almack's?" When perceiving her brother's angry scrutiny fixed upon her movements and reply, she answered with the most gracious bow she could contrive to execute,—“Certainly! and as I am to call for my friend Mrs. Erskyne, I shall probably be there earlier than usual.”

"Is that your ordinary mode of making an assignation,

Frederica?" inquired her brother, when Lord Calder quitted the room.

"Pray do not interrupt me just now with idle inquiries," said she, flying to her writing; "or I shall be too late for the post; but sit down, and make me out a frank for Martwich."

"You had better not give me any such commission, or I may perhaps be tempted to insert a postscript in the envelope, recommending Rawleigh to return without delay, and intercept the interviews between his wife and a set of fashionable libertines."

"Do, if you like,—he will be delighted to find me grown so popular; but make haste, for I hear the last bell—"

Lord Launceston took the letter from her hands, and directed it with a gesture of impatience.

"I think I shall go to Almack's myself to-night," said he.

"By all means!" cried his sister; "you have not been there this season. But how will you tear yourself from Waddlestone House?"

"I was there last night."

"And how will they get on in Charles-street without you?"

"I shall remain with my mother till ten o'clock; after which, I shall devote myself to watching over the welfare of a sister whom I once believed superior to the necessity for any vigilance of mine."

"My welfare will be very ill protected unless you hasten down to King-street, to look after a spare ticket. The patronesses are seldom there after five o'clock; and among *them*, you will not be permitted to assume the ungracious hectoring airs which the affection of your sister induces her to pardon when exhibited towards herself."

Lord Launceston, who had been looking at his watch during the earlier part of this apostrophe, was half-way down stairs ere it was concluded; and had alighted at Willis's before Frederica dried the flood of tears with which her vexation relieved itself after his departure. She had lived two-and-twenty years in the closest intimacy of sisterly affection with her brother William, and he had never breathed one syllable of harsh reproof to her before. But since his familiarization with that forward and impertinent Miss Elbany, Lord Launceston's manners and conversation had become strangely unprepossessing!—She consoled herself with the hope and expectation that her brother would find the conclave in King-street completely broken up; and that he would

be prevented, by the impossibility of procuring a ticket, from rendering her evening as unsatisfactory as her morning.

Among the incidents and passions influencing the variabilities of woman's humour, few are more potent, yet more indignantly disavowed than the love of finery. From the moment a girl becomes conscious of the difference between sky-blue and rose-colour, it is astonishing what wonders can be wrought in the temper of her mind, and mood of her feelings, by the acquisition of a new dress or the sight of some particular friend's Parisian bonnet; and there scarcely exists a woman wise or virtuous enough to be insensible to the change produced in her appearance by variation of attire. Goldsmith knew more of womankind than they know of themselves, when he made Dr. Primrose declare that a set of new ribbons sufficed to metamorphose his philosophical daughter Sophia into a coquette!

Lady Rawleigh, saddened by her husband's absence, and vexed by the *contretemps* of the morning, entered her dressing-room at night to prepare for Almack's, with a mien of sober wisdom such as might have become Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, and formed an edifying frontispiece to her translation of Epictetus. But when, on opening the door, a bevy of female domestics took flight like a covey of partridges through the opposite entrance, to whom Mrs. Pasley had been displaying "my lady's court-dress, and my lady's sumptuous plume just mounted by Monsieur Nardin,"—and Frederica, through the door of the open *commode*, caught a glimpse of the splendours which were to enhance her public appearance on the morrow,—she crossed the room with a lighter step; and a regret arose in her bosom, that Sir Brooke's absence and her mother's indisposition would deprive her of the support of their presence, and themselves of the gratification of witnessing her triumph;—for triumph it must be,—or her second glance at the glistening satin and waving feathers had strangely deceived her. In defiance of her previous intentions, she even complied with Pasley's request that she would wear her set of turquoises at the ball, in order that her diamonds might be free from a particle of dust for the drawing-room.

To own the truth, the "three-piled hyperbole" of the lady's maid that my lady was in too good looks to need the "forran haid of hornament," was rather less figurative than many of Mrs. Pasley's suggestions; Frederica's cheek was flushed with the flurry of her spirits, and her eyes were irradiated with the unnatural brilliancy which a heightened complexion



naturally imparts. Scarcely had she entered the ball-room at Willis's when Mrs. Erskyne spitefully whispered in her ear, "My dear Fred., you must have certainly rubbed your face against one of the red morocco library chairs, or Sir Brooke's yeomanry uniform, or your rouge is full three shades too deep!" an observation which deepened the flush of Lady Rawleigh's blushing cheeks full three shades more; while Lady Rochester, no longer solicitous to decompose so exaggerated a complexion, shook her head, and complained aloud that the true French pink had never been worn by a single Englishwoman since the days of the beautiful Lady Coventry;—that even Lord Calder's new Venus did not find herself at all times sufficiently fair to venture upon rouge of real delicacy."

Delicate or indelicate the augmented brilliancy of Frederica's complexion was received with universal applause; and while she advanced side by side with Mrs. William Erskyne indiscreetly escorted by a single admirer, *she* found herself followed by half-a-dozen; by Sir Robert Morse buzzing his indiscriminate flatteries with the drone of a blue-bottle fly,—Lord Putney occasionally breaking forth into some bitter sarcasm, intended to brand him with the reputation of romantic misanthropy,—Colonel Rhyse unconsciously tendering to her acceptance some of those cut-and-dried sentences of ready-made admiration which he had bestowed upon the successive beauties of that ball-room (and Miss Rawdon among the number) for the last fifteen years,—a young Guardsman, galloppe-mad, tormenting her to augment the list of unhappy females whom his awkwardness had assisted to stretch upon the slippery boards,—and Lord Georgo Madrigal, the Bayley of the aristocracy, whose witticisms are unfortunately borrowed from the most approved authorities, and whose poetry—still more unfortunately—is unquestionably original, and borrowed only from himself; a young gentleman personifying, according to his own lispng *puromen-thiathon*,

The ecthpectanthy and wothe of the fair thate !

It was the first time Lady Rawleigh had appeared in public without her husband; and she was astonished to find that in her independent position of matron, she was a thousand times more in want of the sanction of her own sex, than she had ever been as Frederica Rawdon. A ball-room is the natural element of extreme youth,—the becoming sphere of

an unmarried girl; but a young wife seems to need some excuse for her presence there unsupported by her husband's company. She is rejected from the sofas of the elderly chaperons,—who regard her as an interloper, and suspend in her presence their mutual inquiries into the extent of young Lord Priory's rent-roll;—the young lady's shrink from her with the briefest possible replies to her observations and civilities, in order that they may resume their private flirtations and partner-hunts;—and unless by joining in the dance she chooses to avoid the perils of her isolation, it passes into a general opinion that *she is there to flirt, and to be flirted with.*

Very soon after Lady Rawleigh's entrance she found herself deserted by Mrs. Erskyne, who went off to waltz, and to repose herself afterwards in one of the least ostensible corners of the tea-room; and unwilling to linger near the ropes with the homage of so extensive a group devoted to herself, she accepted the arm of Sir Robert Morse,—her oldest and least attractive acquaintance among them,—and retired to an upper sofa, on which her intimate friends and country-neighbours, Lady Lawford and Lady Huntingfield, were seated in rigid chaperonship; with fan in hand and glassy eyes fixed upon their several daughters, like the immobile effigies of the Queen and Princesses arranged in chairs of state at Mrs. Salmon's wax-work! But to her great embarrassment they became, on her arrival, as mute as the puppets in question; and she found herself treated with a degree of polite reserve, plainly indicating that they regarded her as twenty years too young for the station she had chosen. How could Lady Lawford continue in her presence the narrative with which she had been recreating Lady Huntingfield, concerning the extremely unhandsome conduct pursued by Lord Putney towards her niece Araminta, the preceding summer at Ryde; when it was so probable that his lordship's friend, Sir Brooke Rawleigh's pretty wife might acquaint him with every word of complaint that proceeded from her lips?—Or how could Lady Huntingfield inquire of Lady Lawford whether it was true that the estates of Lord Offaley (the father of colonel Rhyse who was dancing with her daughter Lady Margaret Fieldham) were like to come round, when the affairs of Lord Launceston were so notoriously implicated in the same embarrassment; when *there* sat Lord Launceston's sister in judgment upon their curiosity?

It was in vain that Frederica, with all that persuasive gentleness characteristic of her demeanour, attempted to en-

page them in desultory conversation,—in comments on the beauty of Lady Osterley and the fascinations of Lady Newby;—their monosyllabic replies plainly expressed—“As Sir Brooke is boroughing at Martwich, you certainly did not take the trouble to dress and come to Almack’s for the purpose of twaddling with two respectable middle-aged females who are here on business, with their daughters. Do flirt with that foolish boy who is sighing his adoration at your side, and leave us alone.”

The former part of the hint, poor Frederica in common courtesy was compelled to accept; for she found that it would be as easy to extract conversation from the posts of the orchestra as from the two chaperons, who seemed as mutually engrossed as the partners of a banking-house on their annual settling day. But when, without adopting the latter clause, she was obliged to accept *faute de mieux* the tediousness so liberally bestowed on her by Sir Robert Morse, she soon began to find him encouraged by her graciousness to mingle more gallantry in his humdrum discourse than suited with her taste, or amended the awkwardness of her position; and as the room was now crowded by the confusion following the termination of a quadrille, she seized the opportunity to affect an eager search after her friend Louisa.

As she was about to enter the crowd, followed by Sir Robert Morse with the offer of his arm and an assurance that Mrs. Erskyne was by no means in want of her chaperonage, she noticed the stately figure of Lord Calder, stationed in prominent dignity near the door,—where he was enduring, with courteous patience, one of the most confused and elaborate pieces of scandal which ever slid from the polished lips of Lady Barbara Dynley;—one of those factitious romances of fashionable life, which are as deliberately narrated in the ball-room or the opera-box, as if they were not capable of originating half-a-dozen fatal duels,—a criminal trial or two,—a suicide, a divorce, and the ruin of more than one family of respectability. From such a penance, it may be imagined that Lord Calder turned with unqualified delight on perceiving the approaching figure of the beautiful Frederica, arrayed in more than all its usual loveliness; nor can it be concealed that when Lady Rawleigh found herself, a few minutes afterwards, seated in the embrasure of a window with the utmost spell of his lordship’s conversational powers exerted for her amusement, she thought of her escape from Sir Robert Morse with triumph, and of her absence from her lord and master—with indifference.

The vocation of libertinism is usually adopted or affected with so much presumptuous vanity,—it is so much the custom for men to believe that it requires only an exertion of their own will to become dangerous to the feebler sex,—that the character of a *roué* is vulgarly considered to belong—like the profession of arms—to any fool of fashion anxious to make it his own. But libertinism of the higher order,—libertinism which affects only dangerous and difficult conquests—requires nearly as much talent, and quite as much tact, as to become secretary of state in either of its departments tripartite; and Lord Calder was in the habit of exerting as much diplomacy and political finesse in the course of a single year in order to extend and maintain his dominions in the female world, as would have sufficed for the adjustment of a barrier treaty, or effected a revolution in the international law of half-a-dozen continental states.

It is astonishing by what a singular exertion of verbal and moral influence he contrived, in half an hour's conversation, to place Lady Rawleigh completely at ease both with him and with herself. Sir Robert Morse, in attempting to travel a similar road and render himself personally attractive and important, had arrived at a very different conclusion. *His* homage, tender as it was, plainly implied to Frederica that her accidental position was wholly unprotected,—that she had neither husband, kinsman, nor privileged adorer present to preserve her from the ignominy of falling to the endurance of the old Chaperons, the abhorrence of the dancing young ladies, or the wretchedness of utter isolation;—and that it was her cue to receive his attentions with graciousness and gratitude. The consequence of this blind self-sufficiency recoiled upon his own head; she grew ashamed of herself, and disgusted with him for making her so.

But Lord Calder commenced *his* tactics in a far more artificial and efficient manner, by teaching her to fancy that she reigned in his estimation as the queen of the ball-room; that *he* believed the whole assembly engaged by her beauty, and devoted to her presence; and that her notice of an individual so obscure and uninfluential as himself, could proceed only from the unlimited benevolence of her disposition. His next effort was to lead her to an opinion that the business of all persons not engaged in dancing in a ball-room, is to pair off and place themselves out of the way, that they may not selfishly obstruct the amusements of others; nor was it till he had fairly wrought the mood of Lady Rawleigh to a very satisfactory adoption of these principles, that he attempted to

produce a pleasing impression upon her feelings by the high-bred grace of his demeanour, and the fund of anecdote which enabled him to vary its attractions. A man of ordinary practice in his art, would probably have turned to account the evident jealousy with which his attentions were watched by Lady Blanche Thornton, and occasionally interrupted by the forward advances of Lady Barbara Dynley. But Lord Calder was better advised. He was well aware of the advantage to be derived from rendering the interview unexceptionably calm and satisfactory, and gratifying to her feelings; he wished no unpleasing association to connect itself with his friendship in the mind of Frederica;—he trusted that his manœuvres would soon afford a species of habitual repose to their intercourse;—that

Parmi tous les gens du monde  
On se choisiroit tous les soirs ;

that they should shortly belong to each other amid the tumult of society, by the same negative attraction which united the drunken cavalier and his horse, when all his companions had mounted their steeds and ridden away. "She is in truth," thought the wily Calder, "the most unexceptionably charming woman to be found in the society I frequent; and by letting her suppose that *I* was the first to make the discovery, and determine the verdict of the circle in her favour, her gratitude will ensure me a distinguished place in her preference."

"You are going to the drawing-room to-morrow," said he. "Shall you not be annoyed by making your first appearance there without the sanction of your husband's attendance? It is to be lamented that Sir Brooke Rawleigh should have selected so *very* unlucky a moment to follow the officious guidance of Mr. Lexley."

"I shall, indeed!" replied Frederica, "and I have been very anxious to postpone my presentation. But a drawing-room is now of such rare occurrence, and Rawleigh has insisted so much on my profiting by the preparations I have made for this disagreeable ceremony, that I am obliged to persist in my original plan."

"Oh! if your dress is complete, I have not a single word to say on the subject. I am aware that the eloquence of a becoming costume is all-convincing; nay, that many marriages have been preserved from a rupture, merely because the wedding-clothes were sent home. But who presents you?"

"Lady Derenzy, a cousin of Sir Brooke's,—and the infallible high mightiness of his family."

"Quite right—my dear Lady Rawleigh! you could not have chosen better;—a woman who has totally outlived her fashion, influence, and importance, but of the highest respectability;—exactly calculated to be the Mentor of a young woman entering into life."

Lady Rawleigh regarding Lord Calder as almost paternal in the tone of his counsels, listened with avidity to the suggestions of a man so experienced in the customs and opinions of the great world; when, just as she was leaning across the window, with her long throat bent gracefully towards him, and her beautiful face irradiated by a smile of gratitude for his interest in her favour, she was suddenly struck by the lowering countenance of Lord Lannceston—fixed in angry scrutiny on her solitary interview with one of the most dangerous and dissipated members of fashionable society!—

Involuntarily Frederica started, and turned pale.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Then 'gan the courtiers gaze on every side,  
 And stare on him with big looks, bason-wide :  
 Wondering what mister wight he was, *and whence* ;  
 For he was clad in strange accoustrements,  
 Fashioned with queint devices, never seen  
 In court before,—though there all fashions bin ;  
 Yet he them in newfangleness did pass.

CHAUCER'S "MOTHER BOWSERD'S TALE."

"THE best method of avoiding danger," said a celebrated Hibernian orator, "is to meet it plump!"—and the best mode of evading a quarrel is sometimes by striking the first blow. Lady Rawleigh having accordingly resolved to forestal the expression of her brother's displeasure, beckoned him towards the window with a smile of the most confiding innocence.—

"My dearest Launceston! what do you mean by skulking at this extremity of the room, like a chidden spaniel!—Notwithstanding your anxiety to be here to-night, I never saw you appear so little at ease."

"Nor *you*, my dear Lady Rawleigh, so much;—let us make a fairer and more becoming division of the family assurance," whispered Lord Launceston, with a severe glance at her companion. Then, appearing to repent his own severity, he added "I am here with another man's ticket. The lists of the two patronesses to whom I applied were full,—not a single ticket to be had,—but I had no difficulty in persuading young Brancepeth that he was extremely indisposed, and might *safely* resign his into my hands. Poor Willis is getting strangely myopic!—for with the assistance of a bad cough and a cambric handkerchief, I contrived that he should mistake me for a man with a face freckled like a Lincolnshire frog, with red hair, and a snub nose; but I am far more apprehensive of encountering my kind friend Lady —, who made some inquiries for me among her sister patronesses, and will naturally be anxious to ascertain how I became more successful than herself. In *some* things women are not so easily deceived."—

"After your recent compliments to my confidence," said

Federica, rising good-humouredly from her seat, to the surprise of her brother and the vexation of Lord Calder, "you cannot presume to undervalue my countenance. Give me your arm, and I will not only venture to confront the awful conclave, but to bear you blameless through their inquisitions."

Leaning upon her brother, and restored to a proper sense of her own dignity by the support of a person privileged to be her companion in the eyes of the world, Lady Rawleigh now ventured amid the most fastidious of the brilliant groups from which she had hastily retreated on the desertion of Mrs. Erskyne; and even Lord Launceston forgot his previous irritation, in the gratified pride with which he observed the universal admiration commanded by the graceful elegance of his sister. Frederica was sure to please,—sure to receive a favourable award from the severe jurors of society; for she formed no pretensions which could jar with the interests of any other person, nor affected the slightest claim upon the homage of the fashionable world. Her female friends advanced to greet her without the fear of rivalry; and the male idlers of the ball-room were satisfied that she sought no partner,—no boa-carrier,—no carriage-caller,—from among their well-drilled ranks.

As they quitted a little knot of friends distinguished equally by rank, fashion, opulence, and those talents of society which are necessary to uphold the distinction even of these three-fold advantages, Lady Rawleigh inquired in a whisper of her brother how he should feel in appearing at Almack's with the future Lady Launceston?

"My *Leopora* is too reasonable to be ambitious of mingling in this gaudy throng," said he, apparently more amused than vexed by the query.

"Oh! pardon me! 'Every woman is at heart a rake;' and next to her coronation precedence, I have very little doubt that Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House, values your privilege of peerage, as her daughter's probable passport to Almack's. But after all

*Que viendrait elle faire dans cette galère ?*

" 'To sit in a bay-window and see gallants,' like Ben Jonson's heroine;—to defy the night air and the breath of scandal, like Lord Calder's."

"My dear Launceston, you seem to have acquired Mamma's apprehensions of catching cold! But since you are so care-



ful of my health and reputation, why could you not, being aware of Rawleigh's absence, deign to accompany me hither, instead of loitering in Charles-street fettered and the *doux accords*—"

"Of Miss Elbany's harp!—Allow me to anticipate your retort.—Simply because you never invited me to come, and because the beautiful Lucy never desired me to go. I am as docile as a spaniel."

"Remember then that I desire you will accompany me to-morrow to the drawing-room."

"I have no court-dress ready; and I detest drawing-rooms in general, and that of to-morrow in particular."

"You have your yeomanry uniform, and my commands to wear it. Nay!—do not refuse me,—I have been earnestly in hopes of Rawleigh's return;—and it would be highly disagreeable to me to find myself dependant on Lady Derenzy."

"And still more so to me to find you exposed to the protection of Lord Calder. Well!—since you require my attendance, Fred., I am bound to devote myself to your service; but I own I have very little taste for the toil and tinsel of these exhibitions."

Taking him at his word, Lady Rawleigh now hastened to retire from the ball-room; and on the following morning profited by his declarations, and despatched the carriage to bring him to Bruton-street, while she was enduring the severe strictures of Mrs. Pasley's hooks and eyes, and the still severer ones of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's eyes and criticisms. Her ladyship was fiercely indignant that any coiffeur but Marshall should presume to plume himself on distributing the plumage of a court head; and little less so, that any niece of hers should venture to present herself—or be presented at St. James's, without the preparation of a course of curtsying from Olivier. "She remembered that she had been under the tutorage of the celebrated Rose—(minuet Rose)—six weeks previous to her own *début*; she recollected that no young lady of her time ever dreamed of appearing even at the old Duchess of Cumberland's without a similar kind of training; she hoped and trusted that Lady Rawleigh would not disgrace the lappets she wore by any dereliction from the habits of an ancient and illustrious family."

"My dearest aunt," said Frederica, with a smile such as that ancient and honourable family had rarely displayed among all its generations of dimples, while Pasley clasped on the diamond necklace which completed her splendid costume, "believe me, Marshall and minuets are as obsolete as

Martchal powder. You might quite as reasonably require me to appear in a hoop, or Launceston in red-heeled pumps."

"Well, my dear,—you will hear your mother's opinion on the subject. As her rheumatism would not permit her to assist at your toilet, where I undertook to replace her superintendence, I have promised to take you to Charles-street;—she is naturally very anxious that Miss Elbany should see you."—

To exhibit herself for the amusement of Lady Launceston's presumptuous companion, was a provoking trial to Frederica's patience. But she felt the impossibility of refusing a request urged in her mother's name; an act of conciliation for which she was rewarded on her arrival, by Miss Elbany's supercilious observation that "the English custom of wearing plumes with a French train, produced a species of mermaid anomaly; and that diamonds had a miserable effect by day-light,—nothing could be less becoming."

Slight as was the value attached by Frederica to the judgment of such a person, all the self-content with which she had contemplated her own figure in the large swing-glass of her dressing-room, vanished at once on hearing a sentence of condemnation so coolly pronounced on her appearance; when lo! the flush of indignation which rose to her cheek only tended to enhance the brilliancy of her beauty. A moment before, she had been repining that Sir Brooke was not present to give his opinion on her costume; but she now rejoiced at the tardiness of the Martwich corporation, and relaxed in her enmity towards Mr. Lexley. It is astonishing the effect that can be produced upon the female mind by a single disparaging comment;—the charming Duchess of Devonshire was not more ~~elated~~ by the compliment of the dustman who demanded a spark from her grace's brilliant eyes to light his pipe, than poor Lady Rawleigh was depressed by the sneer of the despised Miss Elbany!—But alas! the future mortifications of the day were destined to assume a still more vexatious character.

Lady Derenzy, the *grande dame* of her husband's family, who had undertaken the office of ushering its new niece into the great world, was one of those cold, hard, worldly women, who regard the gentle tenderness of Nature as the portion of peasants and paupers; yet disdain the influence of fashion as being equally the dowry of parvenus and provincial aspirants. —Her ladyship's notions had stopped short in their progress with the close of the eighteenth century. She still believed Edwin to be the only comic actor on the stage;—had not yet

done wondering at Delphin's dexterity;—acknowledged her preference for Rauzzini,—her adherence to Arne;—maintained that no public amusement would ever rival the attractions of Ranelagh, no private one the readings of Texier. She was aware indeed that a few trivial changes had been introduced into the march of modern existence,—that such toys as steam-vessels and Congreve rockets had been forced upon public adoption; but she still cherished a visionary notion that the good old times would one day return;—that people would once more sail to Calais, in order to visit Paris, and be powder-puffed by a *friseur* of the Faubourg St. Germain; and that her grand nephews from White's and the Travellers', would live to kneel and crave her blessing in suits of pea-green lustring or rose-coloured plush.

Even as the state-policy of the Chinese has rendered contraband all human articles of merchandize, and persists in declining the visits of tour-making dandies and quarto-making literati, with a view to the perpetual retainment of such pleasing delusions as the squareness of the earth, and the unenlightenment of the inhabitants of its surface, saving only those of the canal-besprinkled provinces of the Celestial Empire—Lady Derenzy discriminatingly forbore to admit beneath her roof the paltry innovators of the ~~new~~ century. She was as innocent of the existence of Mechanics' Institutes, or manufactures of useful knowledge, as the stiffest Tory which ever closed its blinking eyes against the new light, or contemned the rail-road of modern intellectualization; and having settled herself during the reign of Strawberry Horace, in a repertorium of old China, enamels, and lapdogs, at Twickenham, she rarely visited the remote metropolis, excepting on important public occasions, such as the accession of a ~~new~~ sovereign; or important private ones, such as the marriage or death of one of the direct members of the Derenzy family. She had been highly gratified by the union of her favourite nephew with a niece of Lady Olivia Tadcaster,—whom she had regarded for the last forty years as a very estimable young woman; and whereas she was in the habit of what she was pleased to term, "paying her duty to their majesties" every ten or fifteen years—terrifying the modern generation by the apparent resuscitation of a mummy,—she rather courted the task of sponsorship to the new lady of Rawleighford.

It had been previously arranged that Lady Rawleigh's carriage should follow that of her antediluvian kinswoman; and when on the reunion of the two ladies in the entrance hall at St. James's, amid the gold lace of the exons, and the over-

ture to the Freischütz fiddle-faddled in the quadrangle by the band of the guards, Lady Derenzy perceived that Frederica had secured the protection of her brother as their escort, her ladyship launched a grim smile of approbation on the person of the handsome Launceston; whose yeomanry-cavalry trappings she mistook for those of the 7th Hussars, and whose figure she involuntarily compared with those of St. Leger and Boothby, the irresistibles of her own day of beauty.

It was very amusing to observe the air of maternal protection assumed by this ancient lady towards many of her acquaintance among the grisly dowager; who—being by ten years her own juniors—she regarded as young creatures, requiring her chaperonage as much as when it first ushered them into the coterie of the Marchioness of Rockingham, or of the old Princess Amelia. In many a withered fold and wrinkle Lady Derenzy still beheld its original dimple, and saw nothing but the glossiness of their long lost tresses in the frizzed toupees of many a faded brow;—the immobility of rheumatic joints she mistook for an air of languor—and the trembling of palsied heads for the mincing of a coquettish demeanour. Whenever Frederica could disengage her own attention from the assiduities of which she was the object on every side, and from the affectionate greetings of various branches of her own noble and extensive family, she could not but overhear snatches of the singular colloquies which arose between her venerable companion and certain of her superannuated contemporaries, whose horrifically spectral appearance would have entered into admirable partnership with that of the phantom king of Denmark on the bastions of Elsinour. And as she listened to their courtly croakings, she thought of the three awful “cummers” assembled on the grave stones of Ravenswood church, in the tale of the Bride of Lammermuir; of which the conclave of these ghastly antiques in velvet, with diamonds glimmering like sepulchral lamps beside their effigies, might have afforded a parody.

“Saw you ever a more crowded drawing-room?” whispered Countess Ronthorst to the old dowager Duchess of Trimblestown.

“Crowded—umph!” mumbled her grace, with a scowl that gleamed beneath her shaggy brows like the glittering eyes of a wild beast in the depths of some horrid cave overhung with brambles. “Crowded like the hustings at Covent Garden, and almost as noisy.—People admitted who would be rejected from the long parlour at the Easter dinner. It

was not so in the Queen's time: it all arises from the want of female presidency.—Faugh!”

“How haggard Lady Rochester is beginning to look!” whispered Lady Lavinia Lisle, to Countess Ronthorst. “Between ourselves, they say she has had repeated paralytic warnings, from the effects of the white lead with which she has been stuccoing her face for the last twenty years.”

“Say rather from the effects of the Elixir de Garus with which she has been poisoning her system for the last ten. Women who begin at twenty to take Eau de Cologne dropped on sugar whenever they feel out of spirits, are seldom out of spirits at fifty-five. Lady Rochester's nécessaire has more Rosolio and Alkermès in its crystal flasks, than Eau de Ninon, or Bouquet des dames!” observed Lady Derenzy, joining the scandalous parliament.

“O fie!”—said Lady Lavinia, affecting girlish incredulity, yet refraining from any vivacious demonstrations, lest she should unsettle the factitious tresses which adorned her parchment forehead.—“One should not even know of such things!”

“Pooh, child!” said Lady Derenzy, who regarded this semi-centurian as a giddy young creature, “I tell you I have seen that woman so stupefied with laudanum, after an execution—”

“Oh! horrible!”

“—in her house,—or the desertion of a lover, that you might have shut her hand in the door without her perceiving it.”

“The errors of Lady Rochester are at least respectable;” grumbled the old duchess, looking over her fierce aquiline nose on certain plebian intruders of the lapped mob around her; “no one has more strictly preserved the dignity of her rank in life.—The first admirer for whom she forfeited her reputation, was royal; and as to *all* the rest”—

“A very comprehensive word, my dear duchess!” said Countess Ronthorst spitefully.

“I do not believe she has ever strayed out of the peerage.”

“Oh! fie!” cried Lady Lavinia again, giving a playful tap with her spangled fan to the withered sticks shrunken within the spreading velvet sleeve of the Duchess of Trimblestown.

“What creatures one sees here, now-a-days!” said Lady Derenzy with a sneer, the acrid influence of which might have tarnished the gold lace upon old Lord Twadell's regimentals, who stood beside her, which were cut after the fashion of those of the great Marquis of Granby on a sign-post. “Yonder gaunt looking woman, bristled like the crest

of William de la Mark and covered with jewels, is the daughter of Lord Waldinghurst's steward."

"But with your ladyship's permission, if I may venture an opinion on a point where your ladyship is in all probability so very much better informed," said Lord Twadell—emphasizing with his well-powdered head till the white particles flew in all directions, and the duchess's velvet appeared to have taken multure in kind from his floury abundance,—“that lady is *now* the much respected wife of one of our most eminent law-lords."

"Law-lords!—Birmingham nobility!" cried Countess Ronthorst, the naturalized widow of a former Austrian Ambassador, whose quarterings would have agonized Sir Isaac Heard, and required all the skill of the Ratisbon College or Toison d'or to emblazon. "I do not see why the Courts of Chancery and Common Pleas should serve as antechambers to the Court of St. James's!"

"I saw my chaplain and my physician bowing to each other on the stairs," said Lady Derensy, "like two rooks nodding their heads in a ploughed field."

"The learned professions, ladies,—the learned professions," cried Lord Twadell, inflating each word till it swelled out of his crater-like mouth, like one of Giroux's balloons, "the learned professions form a distinct class of the community, commanding the respect of enlightened persons of—all—of—all—of—all—classes of the community."

"*Class* is a word obliterated from all vocabularies but those of school-ushers,—Scotch gardeners,—and political economists. One hears of 'the labouring classes,' in an emigration pamphlet at Edinburgh, and of '*la classe industrielle*,' in the oration of a libéral in Paris;—but in London, the only distinction I ever perceive in its rabble-rout is that which exists between those who buy and those who sell.—Such are the '*classes* of the community,' in *la nation boutiquière*!"

"There ought to be a Pict's-wall built up to defend us against the incursions of such hordes of barbarians," said the duchess, with a dry, short, hectic-cough, indicating that the armorial honours of the escutcheon on which she prided herself would very shortly adorn a hatchment over the lofty portals of Trimblestown House, and that her bony and unhumanized frame was destined without delay to 'darkness and the worm!'—"I would sooner see every descendant of my house stretched in their grave, than disgraced by a commercial alliance. It is the pride of my life that not one of my four daughters was allowed to marry lower than an earldom."

Poor Lady Lavinia uttered a soft sentimental sigh (as bitter as a gust of the east wind) in honour of four contemporary martyrs, whom she had seen dragooned to the altar by her grace's maternal severity. But all four were now released from their connubial thralldom;—two by death,—and two by Doctors' Commons!

"One can scarcely wonder that young men of susceptible temperament, let their rank in life be what it may," said Lord Twadell elegiacally, "should forget the claims of ancestry in favour of a creature so divine as yonder young lady in the white robe; yet I am credibly informed that her father is—pardon me, ladies, so nauseous an allusion—a *soap-boiler*!"

"A soap-boiler!" cried the duchess, feeling for her salts. "Of the celebrated firm of Waddlestone and Co.," said Lord Twadell, closing his snuff-box with a jerk of disdain.

"Waddlestone!" faintly ejaculated her grace.

"Waddlestone!" cried Countess Ronthorst.

"Waddlestone!" exclaimed Lady Derenzy, as if the word blistered her lips.

"Waddlestone!" said Lord Twadell affirmatively.

"Wad-dle-stone!" minced Lady Lavinia.

"Waddlestone!" cried Lady Huntingfield, puffing up to the scene.

"Waddlestone!" uttered a chorus of abhorrent voices.

And not even the magic surname of "TARARE" echoed from prince to peer, from peer to chamberlain in Count Hamilton's charming tale of "Fleur d'épine," was graced with more extensive reiteration than that which sounded a knell of consternation in the ears of poor Lady Rawleigh, —a breathless auditor of this edifying colloquy.

Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still Irony! still thou art a bitter draught!—and though thousands in all ages—patricians and plebeians,—rhetoricians and politicians,—of the beau monde and the low monde,—have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less nauseous on that account. It is thou, Tondyism!—thrice sweet and gracious goddess! whose taste is grateful and ever will be so, till nature herself shall change;—no vegetable dye can ebonize thy silver effulgence,—no chymic power transmute thy mosaic gold to brass. With thee to smile upon him as he eats his venison, the gouty peer is happier than the robust peasant whose brown bread repugates thy approach.—But again I say, disguise thyself as thou wilt, still Irony,—whether in Blackwood's Magazine, or the Court of St. James's,—still thou art a bitter draught!

Upon the original mention of a name so disagreeably associated as that of Waddlestone, Lady Rawleigh had involuntarily retreated behind the skirts of the most expansive dowager of the group; while Lord Launceston, who was engaged in conversation with the young Duke of Draxfield, implied by a glance towards the green and gold rotundity of Mrs. Waddlestone's person (who was struggling towards the great staircase, looking like the animated image of a colossal Cantelupe melon), and by a significant smile at the retreating movements of his sister, that he was aware of the vicinity of his future kindred without being much more solicitous than herself to attract their notice. They were soon, however, put out of their pain,—Mrs. W., dazzled by the splendid spectacle which presented itself for the first time to her eyes, was too much occupied with the management of her own train, and the maintenance of her daughter's courage, to recognize her passive cavalier;—she passed and made no sign!

“Thank Heaven!” secretly exclaimed Frederica, covering the confusion of her terror by kissing her hand to Lady Barbara Dynley, who was already struggling with the brilliant crowd on the staircase,—occasionally turning round to remonstrate with a young officer of the guards, whose bullion tassels had no mercy upon her blonde flounce,—while the dress-sword of a venerable general of brigade, two steps above, ever and anon poked the point of its scabbard menacingly into the eye,—“Thank Heaven, I have escaped that dreadful woman! I am persuaded Lady Derenzy would have undergone a fit of apoplexy on the spot, on detecting my brother's intimacy with the family of a soap-boiler. I have at least the consolation of knowing that *she* will never again pass the lodges at Rawleighford after the solemnization of Launceston's marriage!”

After a tedious ascent of the crowded stairs, and a lingering progress through the ante-chambers, in the course of which Lady Derenzy's chiu grew more and more elevated, till it appeared a copy of Malvolio's supercilious and self-conceited countenance, they reached the threshold of the royal presence; when her ladyship, turning to Frederica with a “Now my dear, your train,” in anticipation of the interference of the page in waiting, started with a glare of almost delirious horror on perceiving that Mrs. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House, was addressing herself familiarly to the brother of the lady whose presentation she had rashly undertaken. She had some difficulty in believing the evidence of her own eyes, which were seldom so inconveniently emancipated from their almost co-existent spectacles; but a slight delay at the door



of the presence chamber served to convey the following afflicting sentences to her paralyzed ears! And lo! the diamond pendulums thereunto appended trembled while she listened!—

“La! my dear Launceston!—Was ever anything so lucky as this *rencontre*! Such disasters!—I have been in a peck of troubles;—but thank goodness, all’s right again. You know we *was* to have been presented by the Lady Mayoress; but somehow or other we have missed her in this tremendous crowd, and I was afraid we should have to put up with a lady in waiting, which never looks well in the papers. ‘Mrs. Waddlestone and daughter, by the lady in waiting,’ would have been all no how, as one may say for people of our fortune; and even the king would have thought it odd.”

An irrepressible titter which burst from the accidental auditors of this illtimed and illplaced explanation, sounded in the ears of Lady Derenzy like the hissing of all the serpents of all the furies!

“When Lord Launceston has terminated his conversation with—that person,”—she began, haughtily addressing herself to Frederica, who with cheeks crimsoned by vexation had gladly taken refuge from her shame in a hurried dialogue with Lord Calder, and would neither hear Mrs. Waddlestone’s recapitulation of her miseries, nor notice Lady Derenzy’s indignation; while her associate preserved a most judicial and judicious gravity of aspect, in spite of the sarcastic mirth which twinkled in the depths of his large grey eyes.

“When I spied you out, my dear Launceston,” continued Mrs. Waddlestone, wholly unconscious of the consternation she was exciting in the few, and the risibility in the many, “says I to Leo., ‘Well, my love, after all, things will turn out for the best,—*après la pluie, le beau temps*. Here is our friend Launceston, who will easily find us out some one to present us among all his fine friends, or fine friends are not good for much;’ and says she”—

“Will your ladyship proceed?” inquired Lady Derenzy of Frederica, in an attitude of refrigeration such as might have been borrowed from Michael Angelo’s statue of snow. But, alas! even had Lady Rawleigh’s attention been alienable from the discourse of Lord Calder, on which she affected to fix her eager interest, the appeal must have proved unavailing;—the fatal door was still guarded by the flaming sword of regal inaccessibility;—the presence chamber was not yet attainable by a new supply of aspirants.—The whole group

remained as incapable of locomotion as if it had been enclosed in the Black Hole of Calcutta.

But although Frederica turned a determinately deaf ear to the atrocities of Mrs. Waddlestone, and the imperial indignation of Lady Derenzy, she could not affect an act of ungraciousness towards her brother;—notwithstanding his condemnable predilection for Miss Elbany, and his injurious animosity towards her friend Lord Calder, her gentle heart could not cherish an unkind feeling towards *him*. No sooner did she hear the words “My dear Frederica!” whispered behind her, than she interrupted her conversation with her aristocratic admirer by a bow of apology, in order to listen to a request framed by Lord Launceston, in the most pathetic terms which had ever yet been heard to grace his familiar oratory.

“My dear Fred!—I am persuaded you are too good-natured to refuse an entreaty of mine, or to decline an act of kindness in favour of any of my friends. Mrs. Waddlestone has been so unfortunate as to be separated from her friend, the Lady Mayoress;—will you oblige me by undertaking to present her and Leonora!—*Do*, my dear sister,” he added in a lower voice, “it is highly important to me to keep on a good footing with this woman.”

“Lady Rawleigh!” again ejaculated Lady Derenzy, with a hollow voice which sounded almost like the “Swear!” of the Danish king with whom she has been already compared.

“I rather think your ladyship’s turn is come,” interrupted Lord Calder urging her towards the door, with a gesture expressive of his anxiety to spare her the humiliating contact with which she was menaced.

Poor Frederica advancing a few steps, now whispered a word or two in the ear of Sir Brooke’s dictatorial kinswoman, which appeared endowed with some rabid contagion. Her countenance became distorted by grimaces of suppressed fury;—and the words “insult,—degradation,—horror,—and eternal resentment,” rattled like a volley of small shot from her quivering lips. But Lady Rawleigh, on turning a second time towards her brother, caught a glimpse in the rear of the Cantelupe of a pair of lips quivering with very different emotions, and graced with the loveliest expression of distress she had ever beheld. The gentle, timid Leonora, was in truth gifted with far too delicate a sensibility not to perceive the exact state of feeling excited around her by the vulgar familiarity of her mother. *Her* refinement of tact revealed to her that they were at once the objects of contempt and avoidance;

yet anxious as she had been to suppress the ambition of her injudicious parent for their appearance at the drawing-room, she saw that retreat was now impossible,—that they *must* pursue the unwelcome ceremony to an end : and she could scarcely restrain her tears on perceiving the embarrassment of Lord Launceston,—the reluctance of his sister,—the furious excitement of Lady Derenzy,—the dignified disdain of Lord Calder,—and the astonishment of every individual within sight and hearing of the scene. It may easily be imagined, however, that the avoidance of her lover was of these united trials the most afflicting.

But no sooner did Lady Rawleigh detect the expressive emotion of the graceful and interesting Leonora, than her recollection glanced to their interview in the gardens of Waddlestone House, when she had bestowed the encouraging notice of its heiress on the supposed dependant of poor Mrs. Martha Derenzy ;—and without further hesitation,—defying at once the astonishment of Lord Calder, and the insane horror of Lady Derenzy,—she accepted her brother's proposal of an introduction to the Waddlestones, and *the* introduction of the Waddlestones ; and executing a profound curtsy to the globose mass of green and gold tissue, and a more encouraging one to the trembling daughter,—followed her shuddering aunt into the blue chamber !—

## CHAPTER XV.

The one coach was green,—the other was blue ; and not the green and blue chariots in the Circus of Rome or Constantinople excited more turmoil among the citizens, than the double apparition occasioned in the mind of the Lord Keeper.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

It was not till lady Rawleigh reached her own dressing-room,—resigned her temporary splendours to their bandboxes—and her weary frame to the friendly arm chair gifted like that of St. Swithin with a thousand visionary spells of agony,—that she could recall to mind the thousand and one aggravations of the disaster which had steeped her cheeks in blushes, and her soul in bitterness. She was now beyond the reach of those cordial thanks with which Lord Launceston had attempted to repay the sacrifice exacted by his sordid speculations ; beyond the reach of the grateful gentle smile with which Leonora had raised her soft eyes towards her own. In her mental revision of the scene she saw nothing but the wondering and affectedly candid air of Lady Lotus, and the sparkling of Mrs. William Erskyne's venomous eyes,—both of whom were assembled in the presence chamber by the malice of her untoward destiny ! Lord Calder's look of grave commiseration, and Lord Putney's distant bow of contemptuous disavowal, were as nothing compared with the insulting mirth of her own particular rival and her own particular friend !—How the lip of the lord in waiting could have preserved its gravity—how the countenance of George IV. its gracious benignity—in listening to the name she had been so reluctantly compelled to stammer forth for their acceptance, was more than she could conjecture ; and willingly would she have beheld the Cantelupe melon—the subject of this horrible dilemma—cut into as many quarterings as ever graced the escutcheon of Countess Ronthorst.

And then the newspapers of the morrow ! How would Lady Rochester sneer, and the Duchess of Trimblestown scoff, on beholding among the presentations—

Lady Rawleigh, on her marriage, by Lady Derenzy.

Mrs. and Miss WADDLESTONE, on their return from the continent, by—Lady Rawleigh !

Or perhaps—for who could say to what extent of magniloquence the saponaceous gold of Mrs. W——e might prevail over the pen of the editor,—some awful paragraph headed in the times by “*Advertisement*,”—in the Morning Herald by “*From a Correspondent*,” might acquaint the sneerers of the metropolis not only with every ell of tissue and every carat of diamonds glittering on the person of the soapboiler’s wife, but with the future alliance about to tarnish the glories of the houses of Rawdon, Wingfield, and Rawleigh of Rawleighford! Frederica covered her face with her cambric handkerchief, to conceal the tears which fell with their falling dignity!

“She had not wept long,” as Billy Lackaday or a Lane and Newmanist would say, when Lady Olivia, who had been describing an orbit in the parish of St. James’s to catch a glimpse of the tips of plumes and the state wigs on the coach-boxes of her friends, bustled in to learn the news of the court. “Has it been a good drawing-room?—many of the royal family?—many diamonds?—many foreign ambassadors?—many domestic oddities?—But you are in tears, my dear love,” said her ladyship, interrupting herself, and drawing a chair towards that of her niece. “What *has* happened?—have you lost any of your jewels in the crowd?”

Frederica briefly recapitulated her miseries; which to her infinite indignation were very cavalierly treated by Lady Olivia. “You are quite above the reach of such contamination, my dear,” said she in a pacifying tone. “Now a person like my poor little Mrs. Woodington would be crushed beneath the weight of such an incident—a parasite plant accustomed to cling to elevated objects, perishes when compelled to trail along the ground. But you, my dear Frederica, are like the goodly cedar-tree.”

“More like a weeping willow just now;” said Lady Rawleigh, drying her eyes, and attempting to rally her spirits. “I trust Lady Derenzy will bequeath me her forgiveness, for I am convinced she will die of the shock.”

“Nonsense!—she has been existing all her life in an atmosphere which magnifies the objects immediately surrounding her. Depend on it she will live to suffer a still severer martyrdom, on beholding the magnificence which Lord Launceston’s marriage will shortly shower down on Marston Park. But tell me, my dear child—for I have an ulterior object in this little visit,—did you observe any one with the Austrian ambassadress this morning?”

“Her daughter, looking almost as distinguished as herself.”

“No, no! a stranger.”

"The Princess of Anhalt-Haagenstein, and Countess Rodenfels, whom she presented."

"No!—a *stranger*,—a person you never saw before?"

"Certainly not!—I stood near them for some time with Lady Barbara Dynley, their intimate friend."

"I really cannot make it all out!"

"What *all*, my dear aunt! You are growing as mysterious as an oracle, or as Miss Elbany."

"Why you see, Fred., it is a very disagreeable subject to talk about, only I know I can rely on your discretion."

"You do not appear inclined to measure its force with any very weighty burden at present."

"The facts are simply these. You may recollect that I mentioned to you a charming encounter I made in the steam-boat on the Rhine, with a noble Bohemian family;—delightful people!—unable to speak a syllable of either English or French.—As I had not much difficulty in rubbing up my German, we got on charmingly together;—they dined with *me* at Bingen, and I supped with *them* at Bonn;—after which, we lived incessantly together through Holland till my arrival at Dover."

"And what brought them to England?"

"Ay! there's the rub! They told me they were coming on a visit to Lord Vilz; and although I was persuaded that no such name was to be found in the peerage, I made allowances for defect of pronunciation. I am sure I had difficulty enough in conquering *their* title of Czartobarlozkna. Well, my dear,—I made no scruple of recommending my friends to Fenton's hotel, where I conveyed them in my own carriage, because having navigated their way by the Danube and the Rhine to England, they brought of course no species of travelling equipage."

"Very considerate of you, my dear aunt."

"The day after my arrival I took them to the Austrian embassy; where I did not get out, because *there* at least they could explain themselves in their own language, and I happened to have two or three cards to leave in Portland-place. They told me on our return that the princess had promised to give an assembly expressly to introduce them to the London world."

"But *you* made a party for them to Richmond, if I recollect?"

"I did, indeed; and I fear rather prematurely! For although I have been too much occupied since my arrival in town with the arrangement of my house, and the reorganiza-

tion of my visiting list, to pay all the attention and make all the inquiries concerning my friends and *their* friend Lord Vilz, which might have been desirable, it certainly *has* struck me as strange that one heard nothing of them in society."

"Very true;—foreigners of real distinction are of such very rapid currency."

"Yesterday I wrote my friend Countess Czartobarlozkna a little note,—for one cannot so well make this sort of delicate inquiry verbally,—asking her explicitly whether I should meet her at the ambassador's next week; to which she replied—(and her German idiom so involves the fact that I cannot exactly determine the meaning of her phrase)—that *this* day was appointed for their first appearance in public."

"At the drawing-room, of course?"

"So I thought—so I hoped! But as you assure me that no stranger accompanied the princess, my mind begins to misgive me;—more especially—I hardly like to mention what may be merely a conjectural coincidence,—more especially as a set of Bohemian jugglers are to exhibit their feats to-day at Willis's rooms."

"At Lord Vilz's hotel!—alas—alas!—This is nearly as bad as the Waddlestone affair!"

"Now don't laugh, Frederica!—there is really nothing to make the subject of a jest in a circumstance degrading to the whole family."

"But you know, my dear aunt, *we* are as the goodly cedar-tree."

"Nonsense!—when people wish to invalidate a fact, they always assume figurative language to allow for greater latitude."

"You will make quite a politician of me; what a pity that I cannot appropriate the vacant seat for Martwich!"

"A note, my lady!" said Mrs. Pasley, stealing on tiptoe to Lady Rawleigh's side, with a silver salver in her hand, and in her eyes the ordinary restlessness of a lady's maid's curiosity. And while she retired with several petty movements at return, like the ebbing of the tide on a level shore, Frederica with Lady Olivia's permission read as follows:

"As well as the pungent flavour of Barilla with which you were infected when I last saw you would permit me to understand your explanations, my dear Frederica, you have resolved to disappoint me touching the races to-morrow. But can you persist in such barbarity? It is too late for me to secure another companion;—and I cannot go alone with Sir Robert Morse, Lord Calder, and Mr. Vaux, who form the

party.—The horses have long been ordered and must be paid for, go or stay; Gunter has already iced our Champagne, and packed our Périgords; I have a *paille d'Italie* hanging before my eyes, which drives me to distraction; and per favour of this auspicious but perplexing union of circumstances, I shall certainly never forgive you if you persist in your unfriendly design. Mr. Vaux will doubtless circulate in some witty lampoon that you were afraid to trust yourself with Calder; and the world will whisper in humble prose that you were apprehensive of showing yourself in public, with your reputation still *mottled* by contact with Mrs. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House; but rather chose to stay at home *in the suds*. Ask Lady Olivia,—ask any one you please, except your cross-grained self,—whether it would not be far wiser on your part to *brusquer l'affaire* by appearing wholly unconcerned, and surrounded by persons more worthily qualified for your friendship than Waddlestone and Co.?

YRS. (as you decide),  
 LOUISA ERSKYNE."

Lady Rawleigh did *not* think it necessary to consult her aunt on this occasion; partly from a fear of her inferences, and partly from an apprehension that she might demand a sight of Lady Erskyne's note, and in enlarging upon its flip-pant allusion to Lord Calder prolong the conference till midnight. She saw there was no escape from so eager an appeal; that, in case of a repetition of her apologies, Louisa would certainly arrive in person to plead her cause; and poor Frederica was so little in the habit of giving pain to any one, and so little addicted to the salutary austerity of saying "No!" that she beheld herself already seated, a repining victim, in the corner of Mrs. Erskyne's britscha.

She replied therefore to this taunting billet, by a hasty consent to resume her engagement, qualified by an earnest entreaty that her friend would endeavour to procure in the interim some less reluctant companion; and despatched at the same time a note of excuse to Lady Barbary Dynley, whose assembly, expressly devised to ensure a second exhibition of the court-heads of the morning—she had long promised to attend:—then, with considerable vexation of spirit, proceeded with her aunt to Charles-street, to dine *en famille* with her mother. Even there she did not think it necessary to allude to her engagement for the races, fearing that her brother's idle suspicions might be renewed, on learning that



lord Calder was to be of the party; and that Launceston might still further increase her catalogue of disasters for the day, by interfering between them in some unpleasant and wholly superfluous remonstrance.

Meanwhile Mrs. Erskyne had not the slightest intention of profiting by Frederica's hint that she should seek out some less scrupulous female companion. She was aware that no one would suit *her* purpose half so well as Lady Rawleigh;—that no one was more capable of throwing away a dozen guineas without calculation or regret;—no one less likely to detect the double flirtation she was carrying on by way of pastime, with Mr. Vaux and Sir Robert Morse. But above all, the artful Louisa was fully conscious that she was indebted for the temptation held out of her friend's society, for Lord Calder's gracious acceptance of her invitation.

It was probably for the first time in his life that his lordship had consented to appear in public in any other than one of his own matchless equipages; and at any other moment, to go toddling along the road with one of Newman's inferior, unmatched sets, in a carriage leaden as the wings of despair with a woman flighty as the plumage of folly, would have very little suited his fastidious fancy. He regarded Mrs. Erskyne as a pretty little kitten who, under pretence of innocent playfulness, was in the habit of making very indiscriminate use of her claws;—and detested Sir Robert Morse as a vulgar fine gentleman,—a third-rate man with first-rate pretensions.—But Lady Rawleigh,—the lovely, tranquil, spotless, faultless Lady Rawleigh,—with her unsuspecting heart an unpretending demeanour,—was an atonement for all these evils, animate and inanimate; and for a thousand more which he doubted not would assail him in the course of the day. Sharing the taste of Paulo of Rimini, for the spectacle of

#### A lovely woman in a rural spot,

he prepared himself for the promised drive with an anxiety as ardent as if his whole fortune had been staked on the event of the Hampton races.

In one respect his misgivings were premature. Mrs. Erskyne lived too much in male society, and was habitually surrounded by too many fashionable devotees, to be encumbered with a heavy carriage in addition to a heavy husband. Her horses, which had been carefully bespoken by Lord Putney, were as the "couriers of the air" honourably commemorated in Macbeth's rhapsody;—and when, under the

cheering influence of the meridian sun, the black and well-varnished britschka glided to the door, with Vaux and Lord Putney (Sir Robert had turned sulky) in white hats in the rumble, Lord Calder occupying the back seat, for the first time since his Etonian boyhood, and a corner left for Lady Rawleigh beside Louisa in her *paille d'Italie* and choicest smiles,—assuredly no fault could be detected in the arrangements of the day. Even her ladyship, as she tripped down the steps followed by Martin and her mantle, experienced an involuntary impulse of exhilaration which seemed to reflect the sunshine of the skies on her own beaming and ingenuous countenance. The door was sharply closed as she took her seat among her congratulating companions;—the postboys received their signal from the outrider;—and away they went—joyous with youth, and health, and prosperity.

Noisy and self-engrossed, neither the party nor its menial administrants had been conscious of a voice which,—like that of John Gilpin's loving spouse,—reiterated "Stop!—stop!" as they rolled away from the door. Even the jangle of the antiquated and un-Collingeized vehicle which now rattled up at the rear of a jaded pair of rats,—such as are kept half alive till after the reign of Epsom and Ascot, in order to act as substitutes for the post-horses of travellers reaching London at that inauspicious moment,—remained inaudible. A head, which resembled that of a capuchin pigeon poking out of a dove-cote to watch for rain, protruded itself from the dexter window of Mr. Lexley's travelling carriage; while from the sinister—and sinister indeed was the portent—poor Sir Brooke was stretching his dolorous but indignant visage, to behold the wilful, wayward, wanton, rebellious, and treacherous departure of Frederica on an expedition of frivolous amusement;—in defiance of his vociferous and reiterated mandate of recall;—in company with a woman he despised and a man he dreaded;—and, in spite of his own absence, smiling with more than her usual sportive gaiety upon both!—

It was lucky for the little lame old postboy, who had been summoned from his superannuated inactivity to officiate on this occasion, that the measure of his guerdon rested with the punctual and conscientious senator with whom he jogged onwards from Bruton-street towards St. Margaret's, Westminster.

## CHAPTER XVI.

ORL.—O, but she is wise!

ROS.—Or else she could not have the wit to do this;—the wiser the waywarder!

AS YOU LIKE IT.

DURING the sojourn of the unfortunate Sir Brooke Rawleigh in the borough of Martwich, he had scarcely suffered more from the impracticable and litigious character of its burgesses (a body incorporating among other living lumber, four attorneys, and a thing that called himself an assessor), than from his misgivings touching the proceedings of his establishment in the metropolis. While he found himself destined to endure in the service of his country and its parliament, all the vexations which parchment, pounce, and pragmatality can produce, the letters of Frederica appeared to him almost as ominous of coming evil, as the deeds-of-the-solicitors-of-the-trustees-of-the-minor-of-the-estate, including in its net produce the borough whose representation he was ambitious of appropriating.

The post of Tuesday had asserted Lady Rawleigh's intention to excuse herself from attending Lord Calder's supper party; while that of Wednesday produced a volume in praise of the society by which she had found it graced;—and Wednesday's declarations, that Frederica had no intention of again seeking the tumultuous pleasures of the great world during the absence of her husband, were neutralized by Thursday's description of the supreme excellence of the ball of the preceding night. To the first of these contradictions, Sir Brooke was rendered in some degree insensible by the posthumous torments of a horrible bowl of corporation-punch; even had he swallowed the four attorneys and the assessor in a single dose, his dyspepsia could not have been more excruciating. But when,—edged into the suspicious brevity of a postscript extorted by Launceston's threats,—he perused the slight notice "Lord Calder has just found his way *by accident* into my prohibited drawing-room; he was as usual rather caustic but very amusing,"—his heart began to fail him; and he was even moved to inquire with more pertinacity than was at all

agreeable to the five esquires of the law, or to the host of the Black Bull, "How long this tedious corporation business would detain him at Martwich?"

Luckily, his friend Lexley was far more conversant than himself in the potations pottle-deep, and the botherations burgess-deep, attendant on all traffic and barter in corporation wares. While the four attorneys took fees, and the assessor snuff, he bade the refractory Rawleigh take patience; and was himself content with taking great credit for his temperate mediation between them all. But alas! *his* was the only credit accorded; and while the legal advisers of the trustees of the minor of the estate of Martwich, examined with scrutinizing investigation the number and numbers of the notes they were about to place to the innocent infant's account, per favour of Mr. Ruggs and the timber of the Oxley estate, mine host of the sable Bull would have resented with indignation the slightest scrutiny exercised by Sir Brooke into the contents of the three yards and three-quarters of rancid paper, containing an arithmetical ratio and register of the appetites of the four-and-twenty burgesses of the ancient town of Martwich. The amount,—whether in pounds of beef or of Bank of England notes,—was far more vexatious than frivolous to the departing guest!

This slender inventory of edible filth might probably have been prolonged by the three-and-sixpenny "lights" and two-and-sixpenny "fires" of an additional four-and-twenty hours, had not Frederica's epistolary assurance that she had given up all intention of going to the races,—an assurance written in the Thursday despondency of the Waddlestone exposure,—satisfied him that she would as assuredly make her appearance there as the clerk of the course. Having somewhat unworthily curtailed the gulose prolixities of the alderman of Martwich and his sub-delegates, and very eagerly received the receipt of the author of all the punch composed in his honour, he threw himself back in the corner of Mr. Lexley's carriage; satisfied that, with the exception of pin money, no coin of the realm can be more unsatisfactorily bestowed than that wasted in the cause of borough ventriloquism.

Instead of the inward satisfaction, and outward dignity, which he had anticipated his whole life long as co-existent with the senatorial estate, he found his ill-humour increasing from mile to mile; nor would any turnpikeman along that road of many trusts,—of trusts which trust not and intolerable tolls,—have believed that the rueful visage gracing one side of "Squire Lexley's old chay," was that of the mem-

ber newly elected and duly returned for the borough recently vacated by the late much-respected Peter Grampus, Esq., who had expired of good health, and a fashionable quack.

It would have been well for poor Martin if the dignity of the buttery-hatch had permitted him to follow his lady to the races in a subordinate capacity; or if the perquisites of the steward's room had enabled him to make the excursion on his own behoof. Sir Brooke, although he had beguiled the wretched Lexley from the profound inhumation of an inn feather-bed, so prematurely that the slipshod waiters and the candles of the preceding night were yet unextinguished, in order to reach London at the earliest possible hour;—Sir Brooke,—although guiltless of any food more substantial than a biscuit, since the “tough and scorched mutton” of the preceding day, could not be persuaded to sit down to his tea and French rolls in Bruton-street, till he had cross-examined the legislator of his lower-house, with a degree of severity and acuteness worthy of Counsellor Philips,—or Mr. Wakley, the anti-Chabertist.

But alas! the new M. P. gathered nothing from the responses of the amazed Martin, nor even from the unasked loquacity of the parti-coloured vassal who brought in the “bubbling and loud-hissing urn,” which could either sharpen his appetite or offuscate his suspicions. “My lady had been here,—my lady had been there;”—~~or~~ rather, “my lord Calder had been *here* and my lady had been *there*.”

“Has Lady Rawleigh been riding, Thomas? Did you hear the groom mention whether the new horse carried her ladyship well?”

“Oh! no, Sir Brooke,—my lady has been so taken up at the picture man's, what is painting her ladyship's portrait,—”

“Portrait?”

“My lady goes reg'lar every day to Regent-street—the French gentleman's, Sir.”

“Very well, Thomas;—that will do,—I will ring when I want you.”

Even could Sir Brooke Rawleigh have observed the grimace bestowed on him by his footman as he quitted the room, it would not have increased the measure of his indignation. But when, on the exit of the prying Thomas, he started up from the breakfast-table to pace the room in breathless irritation, and was arrested at the second turn by that attentive domestic's return to inform his master that “the housekeeper desired him to ~~mention~~ there was cold fowl in the house,”

Sir Brooke could willingly have annihilated him on the spot. "I beg your pardon, Sir Brooke," said he, in a most provokingly low and confidential voice, "but I have just recollected that my lady sent orders by Mrs. Pasley, as no one was to mention in the servants' hall on no account about the picture. I ask your pardon, Sir Brooke, but I should be sorry to get my lady's anger for not recollecting her orders."—

"Go, sirrah!" cried the agonized baronet, "go, and —" —the rest of the sentence was drowned in the violent slamming of the dining-room door.

And now, was not the fatal truth apparent?—was he not the most wretched of mankind? A mysterious picture,—a secret visit,—a degrading confidence reposed in her very menial,—a confidence only broken because the treacherous Thomas had probably been unsecured by a sufficient bribe!—Frederica, *his* Frederica,—his own pure, gentle, spotless Frederica, had deceived him, wronged him, forsaken him!—He pushed away the plate of rolls, and leaning his elbows on the vacated space, covered his face with his hands!

The first impulse of the injured husband was despair,—the second a desire for vengeance; nor did the urn which sent up its steamy column on the table before him, boil with a fiercer heat than his own bosom. Snatching up his hat, he rushed from the house; and Thomas, who mounted the area steps to watch the direction taken by his distracted master, began to fear that he had been rash in his loquacity, and that Sir Brooke was gone to throw himself into the Serpentine! But even while he was confidentially communicating this intelligence to the under housemaid, the object of his apprehensions was quietly knocking at Lady Launceston's door. *Quietly* is perhaps an erroneous term; for the old lady's veteran butler—afterwards noticed to her septuagenarian housekeeper, that he had given a tat tat more than usual to the knocker.

There exist in the world,—in the conventional world so called,—certain spots endowed with a local sanctity of a peculiar kind. Nothing but a very romantic turn of mind enabled a celebrated French novelist to imagine a palace in which every syllable uttered was of the truest truth. But although "*Le Palais de la Verité*" was a mere fiction, a "*Mansion of Whispers*" is by no means a rarity among the aristocratic dwellings of the land. There are many patrician houses, in which custom has for so many years moderated the movements and lowered the voices of its inhabitants,

that any unusual elevation of tone, or acceleration of action; passes therein for an insult. Sir Brooke Rawleigh had not been for so many months the son-in-law of Lady Launceston, without becoming aware that it was as much her custom to send for Dr. Camomile after being disordered by a sudden noise, as it would be his own to summon attendance after a paralytic stroke; and so powerful was the influence of her sotto-voce habits upon the feelings of the many to whom she was endeared by her kindly and amiable nature, that so far from borrowing Gargantua's mouth, or the petulance of a provincial Harry VIII., to exclaim "Within there, ho!" to the tardy domestic who turned the door upon its voiceless hinges—as if it were the wicket of the *Enfants Trouvés* charity opening to receive some new-born babe,—he actually subdued his indignation to demand, in the concert-pitch of Charles-street attunement, whether Lady Launceston was at home, and would receive him.

Instead, however, of listening for the reply, which in that pacific vestibule was usually uttered, in a pianissimo resembling the intonation of the invisible girl, he stalked past the trembling domestic; and albeit, like Tarquin, he "did gently press the rushes" in ascending the stairs, his steps were by no means so measured as might have been wished. It was evident from the deep blush with which Miss Elbany rose from Lady Rawleigh's harp as he threw open the drawing-room door, that she anticipated the approach of the son of her patroness rather than that of the new member for Martwich. The utmost vanity of Sir Brooke could not appropriate to himself a similar suffusion; he felt that he had forfeited all claim on such a blush, at the altar of St. George's Church, in the preceding August.

"Where is Lady Launceston?" cried he, in an agitated voice. "Can I see her?"

"Lady Olivia Tadcaster roused her out of her sleep this morning at eight o'clock, and talked her into a fever. She is taking some additional rest after such a shock and such an exertion; so that I should be sorry to wake her. But you seem agitated—I trust no family mischance!—Lady Rawleigh—Lord Launceston—tell me, I beseech you, what has occurred?"

"Nothing—nothing!" cried Sir Brooke, still holding the door in his hand, and retaining his hat on his head in a state of evident bewilderment, such as seemed to announce to poor Lucy that the object of her artful designs was either killed in a duel, or arrested by his tailor.

"Do not deceive me," said she, advancing towards the perturbed Rawleigh with blanched cheeks and quivering lips.

"I have not heard a word of Launceston since I left town," said he; preserving amid all his afflictions the presence of mind to interpret her feminine emotion.

"Then Marston or Rawleighford must be burned down!" thought Lucy, as she gazed upon his haggard looks; "or the Bank has stopped payment—or"—but she curtailed her conjectures when she perceived that their mysterious object was about to quit the room.

"Can I be of the least assistance to you?" she now inquired, approaching him yet nearer, and speaking in that ingratiating tone which the heart of man is so little prepared to resist;—nay, even Sir Brooke, although just then possessed with a spirit which might have done honour to the shaggy breast of an Hyrcanian bear, was mollified by its soothing influence. He removed the objectionable hat, and became humanized in a moment.

"Thank you—no!—I need not trouble *you*. It is needless to disturb and vex other people with one's own affairs."

"I shall be most happy to be vexed with yours, if it will relieve your uneasiness," she continued, pushing a chair towards him while she assumed her seat on the sofa. She had detected with the ready tact of her sex, that he was disordered in his humour, instead of his intellects; that he was only very cross; and suspecting, perhaps, something of the sources of his vexation, felt particularly inclined to be compassionate and conciliatory. Whether *malice*, in the French or English sense of the word—whether curiosity as to the cause or the effect were the motive of her conduct, she certainly exerted herself to obtain a full confession of the grievances of poor Sir Brooke.

"Miss Elbany!" said he, dashing down his gloves on the table, and unconsciously accepting the proffered chair. "I am the most miserable man on earth!" And the loss of his night's rest, and his morning's breakfast, certainly qualified his lengthened visage in corroboration of the statement. "But a week ago—such is the infatuation of human blindness—I thought myself blest with all the choicest gifts of heaven; and even a few hours since, had any one with friendly interposition forewarned me of the truth, and revealed to me the actual state of my"—

"My dear Sir Brooke!" interrupted Miss Elbany, really or affectedly terrified by his agitation, "you alarm me beyond measure. What *has* occurred to Lady Rawleigh?"



"She is gone to Hampton races."

"Is that all?—She has a very fine day for the expedition."

"She is gone with Mrs. William Erskyne."

"One of her oldest friends."

"She is gone with Mr. Vaux."

"The oldest friend of all the world."

"With—Lord Calder."

"The most agreeable companion,—the best bred man in London."

Sir Brooke Rawleigh began to think *the* companion the very reverse of either, when she continued—

"I am delighted to find that her ladyship is at length in the way of passing a pleasant morning; for since you left town she has been sadly out of spirits. Lady Rawleigh dined here yesterday; and when she quitted us, Lady Launceston observed that she should certainly write to remonstrate with you if you prolonged your stay at Martwich; for that poor Frederica was losing all her good looks with fretting."

Rawleigh, who had not yet succeeded in obliterating from his mental vision that smile of healthful loveliness which had shone across Mrs. Erskyne's britschka from the countenance of his wife full upon that of Lord Calder, muttered something in the depths of his soul touching the inventive mendacity of the female sex; but recollecting that no bond of mutual amity demanded the obligation of a lie on the part of Miss Elbany in behalf of her patroness's daughter, he contented himself with observing aloud, "With *fretting*?—you mean with the suggestions of an evil conscience!"

"Come—come!" cried Miss Elbany, good-humouredly; "I am beginning to find out what is the matter with you; and it only remains for me to discover by what *Iago*,—by what 'insinuating knave,—what cogging, cozening slave,' these unpleasant suspicions have been instilled into your mind. Is it Mr. Lexley,—by word of mouth?—or Lord Launceston by word of letter?"

"Facta, Miss Elbany, speak for themselves."

"I trust they speak more explicitly than you do; for with all your eloquence you have brought forward no real subject of complaint."

"How!—do you call it nothing that ever since I left town Frederica has thought proper to throw herself into the society of a person most distasteful to *me*,—most dangerous to her own reputation?"

"You mean Lord Calder; you are not yet in the House; and may therefore *name* 'the noble lord' with impunity."

And if she has,—where is the fault of such a proceeding ;—how can she possibly avoid the presence of a man frequenting her own circle, and courted in every other ?”

“This offers no apology for her making her appearance at Calder House.”

“Excuse me, Sir Brooke ! There are certain ceremonies of society which admit of no evasion ; and which forbade her to excuse herself under circumstances which must have created universal suspicions of your jealousy,—your undeserving want of confidence in your wife.”

“Want of confidence ?—it is my blind reliance on her prudence which has proved the origin of all this evil. I ought not to have left her alone in London.”

“At the distance of a few hundred yards from the protection of her nearest relatives, with whom she has associated daily and almost hourly, since your departure !—But of what further evil do you complain ?”

“Of follies which require a better explanation than even your partiality can invent in her favour. I have accidentally learned from my servant,—yes ! Miss Elbany, Lady Rawleigh’s indiscretions have even placed her in the power of her own menials,—that during my stay at Martwich, my wife has been paying mysterious visits, to some unaccountable abode in Regent street.”

“Those who condescend to listen to the reports of servants, deserve to be mystified with the signs and wonders of their vulgar ignorance.”

“It is said that she is sitting for her picture !—very likely !—destined no doubt to adorn the private gallery of Calder House.”

“Or perhaps to become the companion of yonder miniature,” said Miss Elbany, pointing to a portrait of Lord Launceston, suspended opposite to his mother’s favourite sofa. “Oh ! fie—fie !—Sir Brooke, I thought you superior to all this folly ! But I must do something more than reprove, since I have your reform at heart ; I must convince, and quickly,—for I fear we may be interrupted.”

Chafing a little at the tone of authority assumed by his fair friend, Rawleigh prepared himself to listen with as much patience, as his sorrows and his hunger would admit.

“You are well aware,” she began, “that I have no reason to be biassed in favour of Lady Rawleigh ;—that from the moment of her arrival in town, she had treated me with a degree of distrust and contempt, such as believe me I never experienced from any other person ; such as my state of de-

pendance on Lady Launceston has alone prevented me from resenting with becoming spirit. But I feel that the same poverty and helplessness of condition should have been my protection against her unkindness."

Sir Brooke, as he gazed on the countenance of the beautiful Lucy, softened by sensibility and blushing with earnestness, thought he had never beheld so beautiful a creature. His indignation against the offending Frederica increased with this allusion to her injuries.

"But I cannot allow my private resentments against Lady Rawleigh to influence my view of her conduct; which, from my own observation and knowledge, I venture to acquit in every instance of the charges you have brought against her. Relying on your good-nature to inquire no further on the subject than I am inclined to tell you, I give you my honour that I happened to be in that mysterious dwelling, which you speak of as some horrid cavern belonging to Lord Calder, at the very moment of her visit; and that I myself overheard her enforce a promise of secrecy respecting the picture, because she wished it to surprise her mother, and obtain an impartial verdict from her husband, as that of a stranger."

"Very likely!—when ladies exact promises of secrecy, they are quite at liberty to assign their own motives for the action."

"But how could she hope to deceive you, who are naturally accountable for the price of 'the action' in coin of the realm?"

"Oh, no!—Frederica is independent of my authority on those grounds, as well as on all others. Frederica has her *pin money* to defray the cost of her follies,—whether vicious or frivolous."

"I will not hear another word on the subject, if you are inclined to discuss it in such unhandsome terms. You have no right to apply an epithet to—to your wife, which you would not suffer to be employed against her by another person;—an epithet of which no living woman can be less deserving."

Sir Brooke appeared touched by this generous enthusiasm.

"I venture to assert," continued Miss Elbany, "that no feeling ever rested in the heart,—no idea ever entered the mind of Lady Rawleigh, which might not be safely confided to you,—to me,—to the whole world. The life of routine and filial submission which preceded her marriage having deprived her of all experience in the habits and temptations of general society,—she is now learning her lesson; and if on occasion

of every trivial error arising from ignorance of the world, she is to encounter the severe misinterpretation of those on whose leniency she has the best claim, we must not be surprised to find her at some future time indifferent and desperate as to their condemnation. You are jealous,—do not disavow it; and you have lent a willing ear to your own misrepresentations and those of others. But recollect the powerful declaration of Sterne, that ‘whenever a helpless and innocent victim is to be sacrificed, it is easy to pick up sticks enough in any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with.’”

“I have a great mind,” said Sir Brooke, after a momentary fancy that Miss Lucy Elbany would have made a better governess than companion,—a fancy which caused him to pause and leave this first proposition somewhat unluckily exposed to the ridicule of that lovely preceptress, who regarded his *mind*, as exhibited in the present instance, to be peculiarly *little*.—“I have a *very* great mind to appeal to Frederica’s candour for an explanation of this business; and thus at once confirm or terminate my suspicions.”

“There never was a woman bold enough to act as you suppose, who wanted cunning to vindicate her conduct,” said Miss Elbany, calmly; “I should have no faith in Lady Rawleigh’s innocence on her own asseveration; but satisfied as I am on that point, I advise you to wait for a voluntary explanation, which will prove far more satisfactory to your feelings. If I have any skill in human nature, her confidence will not be long delayed; with *her* quick sensibility and honourable principles she is incapable of deception.”

“I wish she had been incapable of going to the races this morning,” sighed Sir Brooke.

“Had she known that her predilection for a beautiful drive on a summer’s day, in company with several persons of her own rank and respectability in life, would expose her to her husband’s ungenerous usage in a secret cross-examination of her servants during her absence, and his intention of alarming her mother, and irritating her brother, by an overcharged statement of facts, she would probably have relinquished her project.”

“Then after all, how *would* you advise me to act?” said Sir Brooke, glad to find his suspicions and his anger in some measure appeased by the arguments and moderation of a person so impartial as Miss Elbany.—And as his agonies abated, he began to recur with tenderness to his absent wife and his neglected breakfast,—so that hunger had perhaps some share in his persuadability.

"To act?—I see no occasion for *action*. Receive Lady Rawleigh as you usually do, and as she deserves, with affectionate warmth, and I am certain her explanations will supercede all necessity for accusation."

"I believe you are very right," said Rawleigh, taking up his hat, "and I am sure you are very kind. I have no right to trouble you with these tedious details."

"Are you not aware," said she, laughingly extending her hand towards him, "that women—especially spinsters like myself—have an instinctive taste for the audience of domestic squabbles, either for the sake of instruction or—mischief?"

"*You* at least are a peace-maker!" said he; and the relief of his mind, and the inteneration caused by the prospect of his return to the French rolls and cold fowl, induced the sober baronet to imprint a ceremonious salute upon the fair hand which attempted not to resist so unusual an act of courtesy.

Alas! at the very moment the lips of Sir Brooke were applied to those taper fingers, Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham were ushered into the room!

## CHAPTER XVII.

Shall I hear more or shall I speak at this ?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

NOTWITHSTANDING the air of amazement, with which Lady Huntingfield gazed on the awkward and hasty retreat effected by her Rawleighford neighbour, and the sneer of incredulity with which she listened to the explanations of Lady Launceston's companion as to the error which caused her own admittance, and the impossibility of her ladyship's receiving visits that morning, she was very far from expressing the real state of her surprise and indignation at the nature of the scene she had witnessed.

The object of her appearance in Charles-street was to ascertain, if possible, from the ingenuous indiscretion of Lady Launceston's discourse, the real nature of the connexion between her daughter and "the strange soapboiling woman," with whom she had thought proper to associate herself in public contempt. Lady Huntingfield was one of those scrupulous persons who renounce, without much examination, the society of any unlucky individual around whom the malice of the world has raised a cloud of suspicion. No one was more rigorously disposed to maintain the quarantine laws of fashionable life, and reject all contact with infected persons; but unluckily the Lazaretto of her avoidance was open to the shame, rather than to the sin—to offenders convicted of *mauvais ton*, as well as of moral irregularities. "She is very ill spoken of," or "nobody seems to like him," or "she is quite in a second-rate set," were sentences of exclusion from her friendship far more peremptory than those arising from Lady Rochester's sins, or Lady Barbara Dynley's indiscretions; and although she was quite indifferent to what she had estimated as Lady Rawleigh's flirtation with Sir Robert Morse, at Wednesday's Almack's, she was prepared to resent with becoming rigour Lady Rawleigh's public protection of a Mrs. Waddlestone at Thursday's drawing-room. On such occasions Lady Huntingfield had a favourite phrase, which affords a very general protestation of moral disinterestedness to matrons of ferocious severity in their social code. "It is

not on my *own* account; but I must not forget that I have daughters!"

Lady Huntingfield had not only the mortification of being disappointed of the information she coveted, but of witnessing at once the immorality of Lady Launceston's son-in-law, and the provoking self-possession of her companion. In the very face of the exposure Miss Elbany raised her large dark eyes to the narrow, prying visage of the intruder, and replied to her disdainful interrogations with an air of lofty superiority, which appeared to Lady Margaret Fieldham and her Mamma almost worthy of the treadmill; but as Lady Huntingfield herself observed when she recounted the affair to her friend Lady Lawford that evening, "what *can* one expect but confidence in a creature belonging to such a situation in life!" Perhaps Miss Elbany's private opinion of the diffidence and feminine modesty of fine ladies, might have been found reciprocal.

Meanwhile, as dinner-time approached, and Sir Brooke Rawleigh flattered himself that Mrs. Erskyne's britschka, with its miscellaneous contents was approaching too, he began to grow fidgety touching the result of his first interview. Although, in pursuance of Miss Elbany's somewhat professional advice, he strove to calm down the instigations of the busy devil by which he was possessed, he discovered the impossibility of taking his usual ride, or assuming his ordinary routine of occupation. He found himself wandering with restless and listless anxiety, from one room to the other;—examining the notes and cards of invitation on Frederica's writing table; and flinging into the street—with a very superfluous degree of vivacity—a little sprig of myrtle which he discovered on her toilet!—a token accidentally preserved of one of her horticultural progresses with old Mrs. Martha Derenzy, but attributed by Sir Brooke to a more interesting source.

Already the roar of carriages, proclaiming the spring-tide of the ocean of fashion, began to subside into the occasional rumble which announces the desertion of the dusty streets for the still more dusty park; while the swift glancing of the cabriolet or tilbury, conveying the select vestry of the great world from their refuge in St. James's-street, to the homes rendered dear to their hearts by a vicinity to the stables, evinced that the duties of the day must now assume an equestrian form. The melodious tingle-tang of the postman's bell echoed from the distant wilds of Hanover-square like the sound of a heifer straying from its herd in the lonely

pastures of Appenzel ; while the ingenuous youths of Gunter and Grange were seen depositing, at successive areas, certain small round pails such as might have graced the dairies of that lactescent district. To the mind of Sir Brooke Rawleigh, however, they conveyed only a remote announcement of the hour when the steaming Moselle and the flashing Champagne are produced from those icy receptacles to paralyze the human frame—the hour when cutlets are eaten, and domestic feuds forgotten.

Still no britschka appeared ! A second time the scarlet uniform of the letter-man was seen scudding along Bruton-street from the square ; plainly marking out the peculiarly correspondential houses on his road, by lingering at their doors with a prolonged tintinnabulation of warning.—It was six o'clock—half-past—nearly seven ;—and still no britschka appeared !

A bright thought suddenly illuminated that mind, which Sir Brooke had inadvertently proclaimed a *great* mind in his morning colloquy with Miss Elbany. He would go and dine at his club, leaving no message for Frederica ; in order that on her return from her ill-chosen expedition, she might be distracted with doubts and anxieties equal to his own. Such are the nefarious projects which lend a charm to the preponderance of *clubs* in this conjugal and domestic metropolis ! And if a lady's chosen retreat of leisure is to be branded with the opprobrious name of a *boudoir*, what term sufficiently expressive of sulkiness can be found to define those colossal receptacles for the infirm in temper or purpose of the male sex,—where the ill-humoured are not the more sociable for being gregarious ?

"I will just wait a quarter of an hour, and see!" said Sir Brooke, in that sort of anxious tone which always prognosticates a delay of *two* or *three* quarters of an hour for the extension of a man's views. But when these and more had passed away, and the house became impregnated with a savoury odour—proclaiming that the patties were burning in the oven, and the rennettes on the stove—while Martin more than once introduced his rueful visage into the room with an inquiry, "whether dinner was to be served?"—he could no longer master his patience sufficiently to stay and watch the issue ; but replying with mysterious ambiguity, that *he* did not dine at home, the injured man stalked out of the house,—taking his way towards Bond-street, at a rate of speed which rivalled that of his lettered predecessor. But Thomas, who was once more on the watch for his departure, no longer



predicted any mischief from the Serpentine River;—his master had forfeited all romantic interest in *his* eyes by having returned with avidity to the cold fowl;—the experienced footman felt assured that the hour which flavours the aristocratic atmosphere of the West-end with an aroma of *col-d-vents* and *purées*, such as in itself might almost dine a pauper, was not likely to be selected by a man of taste for *felo-de-se*!

It is remarkable, that the feeding hour which so fiercely animates the instincts of the brute creation, only serves to tame down the energies of those equally carnivorous animals who are addicted to the stew-pan and the gridiron. A dinner-bell, which becomes a tocsin to the passions of the Exeter Change, is as soothing as Dante's "*squilla di lontana*," to the ears, whose appurtenant eyes and mouths are accustomed to feast on the scientific compounds of Ude or Dolby.

Having ordered his dinner immediately on emerging from the mighty portico into the mighty vestibule of the mighty file, destined to assemble in daily congregation a couple of hundred pigmies of the fashionable Lilliput, Sir Brooke Rawleigh proceeded to beguile the interval of culinary preparation in the most abstruse chair of the most occult corner of the reading-room—at that hour nearly deserted; and as he ensconced himself within the profound shadow of a half-closed *jalousie*, he became invisible to all comers; with the exception of a little old gentleman, with a short pigtail and a long nose, with whom he was only acquainted by name, who sat opposite wondering by what catoptrical process the honourable member sheltered behind the main-sheet of the vast Times newspaper, could manage to decypher its mysteries in a reversed position. Sir Brooke had, in fact, visited on this occasion the club he was least in the habit of frequenting; and he had the honour of being mistaken by his elderly critic for the learned Dr. Brewster.

But the policy displayed by poor Rawleigh in selecting for the deglutition of his stewed veal *aux petit pois*, a spot in which he was not accustomed to show his face more than twice in the season, proved of very bad omen for the future interests of the Borough of Martwich; and in itself a highly inconsiderate action. While he was still ruminating behind his inverted newspaper on the disasters of his destiny, and wondering whether the remarkable event which had caused Lady Olivia Tadcaster to talk her unfortunate sister out of her sleep,—(a vice-versa as remarkable as the topsy-turvy position of his own studies)—had any reference to the indecorous proceedings of her niece,—a group of gentlemen en-

tered the room to whom the presence of Sir Brooke appeared as little probable as their arrival was little agreeable to himself. Feeling quite unequal to general conversation, and dreading their allusions to his family dilemma, he contrived by elevating his paper screen, so as to bring his eyes on a level with the theatrical announcements,—(which, in their reversed aspect, as well as in the taste of the London public assigned to farce and melo-drama the precedence over what is called the *sterling* drama,)—to escape detection from their own. But alas! this rash ambuscade proved only an aggravation of his former imprudence. He could not suppress his own sense of sound, as well as the sense of sight of the enemy.

"I tell you," said the snappish voice of Sir Robert Morse, who had not forgiven Frederica her Almack's desertion of himself in favour of the envied Calder, "I tell you she would not have dared conduct herself in such a manner if poor Rawleigh had been in town. Rawleigh with all his faults, is fully aware of what is due to his family and to himself; nor would he have tamely submitted to such an outrage."

"Pooh! pooh!" cried Sir Mark Milman, seating himself at the round table in the centre of the room, and selecting a copy of the ——— Magazine, in order that his somnolent soul might burrow into the fleecy recesses of a long, soft, easy article, and torpify in cotton in the middle, "what signify Lady Rawleigh's sayings or doings to *you*? By circulating the tale, you authenticate the scandal;—to-day it runs the round of the clubs,—to-morrow of the newspapers;—and at length—"

But Sir Brooke was not destined to learn the catastrophe anticipated by Sir Mark Milman. From the moment the outline of his head darkened the half-closed jalousie with the announcement of a human presence within, one of those charming handmaidens of Flora who frequent the streets of the metropolis in the months of May and June, had taken her station opposite the window; where ever and anon she held up some faded branches of lilies of the valley and narcissus, enwrap in sheets unpoetically scribbled with a school-boy's exercise. For some time this exquisite nymph,—whose hands and face bore tokens somewhat too superficial that all flesh is dust,—contented herself with dropping, from minute to minute, a curtesy of supplication; but no sooner did Morse, Milman, and Traveller Broughley commence the dialogue so fraught with painful interest to the ears of Sir Brooke, than

her pantomime expanded into speech,—and her speech into one of those curious specimens of autobiography,—“half song, half sermon,”—assuming alternately the Gilesian dialect, and the morbid pathos of an evangelical tract. To listen to her “tale of wo,” was to shut out all audience of his own; to end it with a constable or pacify it with a shilling, was to betray the secret of his ambuscade!

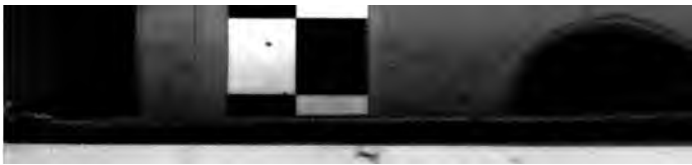
To Rawleigh’s infinite delight, however,—and oh! that such a circumstance should have ever tended to the delectation of a civilized being!—a hackney-coach stand was posted opposite the windows of his club;—and, in the midst of his distress, a fat good-natured country gentleman having scrambled into one of the vehicles on his way to the Blue Boar in Holborn, the damsel with the lilies dried her elaborate tears with a checked apron dirtier than her own face, and flew to attempt an attack upon one whose unsophisticated ~~image~~ and top boots promised more sympathy in her “heart-rending case” than the members of a fashionable club, or of the Mendicity Society. As her murmurs died away amid the clattering of the dislocated limbs of No. 247, to whose window she had forcibly attached herself, the dialogue of the group at the round table again became audible to “poor Rawleigh.” It was now the learned Theban who was on his legs; and the subject of his eloquence would perhaps have been equally intelligible to his unseen friend, had it been phrased with the aid of the erudite speaker’s confusion of Oriental tongues;—of the Doric of the King of Ashantee,—or the talkee-talkee of the Gold Coast.

“I knew him well in Italy,” said Broughley; “and as my friends Gonsalvi and Bevilacqua used to observe, no British hand was ever more prodigal in adorning with gems the diadem of the Eternal City. From Tuscany to Rome, from Rome to Naples, his progress was marked with the munificence of a sovereign prince.”

Sir Brooke had no difficulty in finding an antecedent for Mr. Broughley’s “*him*,” in the person of Lord Calder.

“Yet, with all his splendours and abilities, I confess myself at a loss to account for Lady Rawleigh’s partiality;—a partiality demonstrating itself in so unbecoming a time and place.”

“They are all such a set!” cried Sir Robert Morse, with the impartiality that men of his class are prompt to display towards their bosom-friends. “There is Launceston, whom nothing but his peerage keeps out of the Fleet—or the Peni-



tentiary,—actually making love to his mother's companion; probably some strolling actress in disguise."

"And then Lady Olivia Tadcaster," observed Broughley, "what *can* exceed the absurdity of her conduct, unless that of her niece?—She has positively been introducing a set of ambulant mountebanks, the refuse of the Leipsic fair, into the first society of London, just because they happened to have an unpronounceable name, and to eat snails and sauerkraut without wincing."

"Ay! what was that business?" inquired Sir Robert. "Lady Barbara Dynley told me last night that she had positively been entrapped into a party to Richmond with a tribe of show-people."

"Now my dear Morso!—my dear Sir Robert,"—cried Milman, "why should you push the investigation further;—what matters it to you that two foolish women have made themselves ridiculous?—Leave them to the chastisement of their mutual reproaches."

"What has become of Rawleigh all this time?" inquired Broughley; who on missing any member of society was apt to infer from his own propensities that he might be fishing for flexible stones in the Yellow Sea, or botanizing on the Alpusarres.

"Oh! Lady Rawleigh made it a condition on their marriage that he should go into the House, in order to insure his occasional absence from his own; so she persuaded him to deal with Lexley for the borough of Martwich, and last week they dragooned him down to make a bow to the corporation."

Now this statement on the part of Sir Robert Morse, offensive as it was, afforded considerable solace to the wounded spirits of Sir Brooke;—the incorrectness of its facts, and unfairness of its deductions, were just so much evidence in favour of the innocence of Frederica. But his own situation was becoming extremely embarrassing. Although the voices of the interlocutors before him were not so elevated but that he might be supposed to have remained deaf to their intelligence, still he *had* heard and might hear further of their odious insinuation. To collar three full-grown men,—to seize the horrid Cerberus by whose calumnious bark he had been assailed and eject it from the window, would have been a work of difficulty, danger, and indecorum; and might possibly cause both the quarrel and its motive to be bruited over the town with all its injurious inferences touching the reputation of the Launceston family. He resolved, therefore, to attack the malicious triumvirate singly,—first by a demand

for explanation, and secondly by wager of battle; being aware that even the best of Manton's pistols are but double-barrelled;—and that to subdue three enemies at once, is a feat only compassable by some Briarean wonder of Astley's Amphitheatre. The very paper in his hands shook and rustled with the suppressed struggle of his emotions!

But before Sir Brooke Rawleigh had fully decided on the line of action he should pursue, and whether his extermination of Frederica's detractors should be summary or progressive, Milman and Morse had caught sight of the respectable long-nosed short tailed gentleman, who was occupied in the perusal of an alphabetical list of the House of Commons near him; and being aware, from fatal experience, of those powers of colloquial oppression which render his narratives by no means so concise as his little queue, they motioned to Broughley to follow them and sidled out of the room;—the worthy member's visage being at all times as good at clearing the gallery as a political secret. They departed just in time; in another minute, the breathless waiter, who was in search of the proprietor of the spring-soup which now smoked in an adjoining apartment, entered as they fled across the hall, to summon Sir Brooke from his ensconcement.

But what availed or soup or matelote? The appetite of the wretched Rawleigh had departed with the fugitive slanderers; and not even the prospect of one of Lexley's "bachelor-fare" dinners could have increased his nausea! But although his disgust had attained its utmost eminence, his vexation was destined to a sensible augmentation when, on approaching the *Julienne* aforesaid, he perceived at an adjoining table,—having so completely finished his own meal as to have no further occupation but a tooth-pick and a bottle of claret to interfere with his social propensities,—the man of all others he would have avoided at such a crisis! But on this occasion no friendly paper-screen could interpose to rescue him from the recognition of his friend; and Mr. Dynley now expressed as much joy on his arrival, as *he* had recently experienced on the flight of Milman and Co.

Mr. Dynley has been hitherto only collaterally introduced to the reader, in the person of his better half; a familiar vulgarity very aptly embodied by Lady Barbara, who was pretty and good-natured, while the inferior moiety was cynical both in feature and humour. He was often called "the ugliest dog in London;" but on the whole, this by-word was too social to designate a personage so tinged with rancorous

malignity; nor could anything less than the recommendation of a pretty popular wife, a gentlemanly address, and a certain degree of caustic originality, explain the endurance exerted by the fashionable world in his favour. The apparent aim of his conversation was to instil into the ears of his acquaintance, every drop of bitter personality he could gather for their annoyance throughout the world.

But such is the impotence of human will, and such the finiteness of human comprehension, that the discourse of the pacific and philanthropic Sir Mark Milman had been fated to cause severe pain to the sensitive bosom of the new member for Martwich, while the malicious intentions of Mr. Dynley were productive of solace and consolation beyond all power of prediction. His spite became as it were a balm to the wounds of "poor Rawleigh;" as the rattlesnake is supposed among the Indians to contain an antidote for its own venom.

No sooner was the silver tureen removed from the table, so that its interceptive steam no longer obstructed his view of the countenance he was preparing to convulse with anger, than Dynley exclaimed in a cordial friendly way, that he would come and take his wine for company's sake at Sir Brooke's table; and without waiting for the acquiescence he knew could not be withheld, drew his chair and commenced his attack.

"Well, my dear fellow! and so you are in for Martwich?—I must fill my glass in honour of your success! I trust you have been on your guard with our friend Lexley,—between ourselves, there is not a greater *do* in nature than that plausible rascal;—he is like the lion who, dividing the spoil on all occasions, takes care to possess himself of umpire's share."

"On *this* occasion there was no spoil to divide. A proposition was made me, which my advisers thought a fair one,—I accepted,—and the business was concluded;—there could be no opportunity for my being *done*, as you call it."

"Well! take care he does not entangle you on first entering the House; he may manage to sell the *member* for Martwich as well as the borough, and without your finding it out."

"Thank you for the caution!—I will not prove myself a greater blockhead than I can help.—Waiter!—my cutlets."

"By the way, Rawleigh, it was well imagined of you to make your election fall on the day of the drawing-room; you left the scandal entirely on Lady Rawleigh's shoulders."

"I do not understand you," said Sir Brooke, reddening with a recollection of the insinuations of Morse.

"Ay! ay!—no wonder you consider it a blushing matter. Where on earth did you pick them up!—But I need not pluralize the charge; I cannot suppose that *you* would incur the risk of erasure from Lady Derenzy's will."

"You are as full of enigmas as a schoolboy's pocket-book."

"Oh! I do not mean to say that I was not acquainted with the family *myself* during my winter at Rome; Waddlestone was a great man *here*, with his subscriptions for the examination of the Tiber, and his institution of professorships;—I used to dine with him once or twice a-week. But I should have thought that no humanized individual would undertake the stigma of presenting a *Mrs.* Waddlestone;—I assure you Lady Rawleigh has set the world in an uproar with her magnanimity on the occasion. I apprise you, however, that she is universally blamed,—that the 'Noes' have it."

"Thank God!" piously ejaculated Sir Brooke to the amazement of his companion, who entertained no suspicion from how vast a load of uneasiness he had redeemed the heart of the husband,—of obloquy, the fair fame of the wife. It would have been little less than martyrdom to Mr. Dynley had he recognized his own agency in such an act of benevolence!

"Lady Rawleigh's interference on the occasion was wholly unpremeditated," observed Sir Brooke. "But say no more on the subject, for her conduct has my entire approbation."

"Insensible brute!" muttered Dynley, turning towards the table he had quitted, for a new toothpick.

"To be sure it is not half so bad as old Tadcaster's business!" resumed he, recovering his usual confidence. "No wonder she is off into Essex;—she never could have found courage to see 'The Czartobarlozkna Family' placarded at every corner of the street, after having proclaimed their noblesse de l'empire at every tabby tea-table in London. She has already announced a fête-champetre at her villa, by way of obliterating the scandal; and I hear Lady Rawleigh is to act as patroness on the occasion."

"Thank God!" again ejaculated Rawleigh, who was now relieved from all apprehension that Lady Olivia's flight into the country was caused by disgust at the proceedings of her niece. "Dynley! will you taste this Burgundy; it is really far from bad.—This is a better dining-house than I expected;—the soup augured ill,—the outlets were so-so;—but these quails are excellent, and the soufflée incomparable."

Poor Sir Brooke!—his heart was little less light than that

aerial consistency; and by the time he had finished his wine and his interview with the astonished Dynley,—who could not account for this sudden exhilaration without the aid of a single glass of Champagne,—he prepared to return to Bruton-street, a far happier man than when he quitted home. To fall down a precipice, and alight at the bottom without bruise or fracture, is so bewildering a catastrophe, that Sir Brooke Rawleigh may even be pardoned in this instance his total forgetfulness of an appointment with Mr. Lexley at Bellamy's, for the arrangement of "certain preliminaries."

Perhaps his satisfaction might have been in some degree moderated, had he been aware that while he was engaged in eating his dinner under the malignant eyes of Dynley the cynic,—Frederica was busied with hers, beneath the partial gaze of Lord Calder. On their way to town his lordship had surprised the little party with a magnificent collation, in his sister Lady Rochester's apartments at Hampton Court.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

O my soul's joy!  
 If after every tempest come such calms,  
 May the winds blow till they have waken'd death,  
 And let the labouring bark climb hills of sea  
 Olympus-high!—If it were now to die  
 'Twere now to be most happy!

OTHELLO.

It is a pleasant speculation to remark on the happiness of a life, in which things of no moment give occasion of hope, self-satisfaction, and triumph.

SPECTATOR.

It is time to prose a little! Novels,—especially such as affect to treat of fashionable life,—are born to such an inheritance of shame, it is so much the custom of dull or silly people of all ages and sexes to reprobate them with a sentence of contempt as the most frivolous, flighty, useless, and condemnable productions of the press,—and to threaten their eradication as mere weeds in the garden of Helicon—that it becomes necessary from time to time to throw a heavy lump of marl on the surface, where it must lie for ever in unaffinitive disunion, in order to deceive the dunces into a belief that some mysterious process of improvement is carrying on for their advantage. A few long sentences, sufficiently complex and ungrammatical to perplex the mind of a booby, impart a wondrously philosophical character to a work of fiction; while a little high-flying touch of metaphysics ensures from the lesser fry of critics a plausibility or two, such as “The indications contained in the work before us of a superiority of mind worthy a more ambitious task, induce us to hope that its powers may one day be devoted to nobler purposes!”

But the rational reader,—the reader who expects to find in a novel,—in the “small tale” so defined by our great lexicographer—(a long word expressly introduced for the gratification of the dunces), only those lighter elements of fiction which, like Cowper's *Souhong* “cheer but not inebriate,” and captivate the attention without injury to mind or morals,

—the rational reader is requested to favour Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh with his company three pages hence. Let him assure himself that not a syllable shall be written during his absence worthy the attention of a reasonable being. And now for our prose!—

It is a remarkable evidence of the infatuation of the human mind, of its subjection to the trammels of custom,—of its limitation within the narrow boundaries of precedent,—that we should continue to mould the character of our sons and daughters on the colossal and unnatural model of ancient example. The heroic sullenness of “Achilles’s wrath” is inflicted on the admiration of some incipient ensign of the Guards, who would be sent to Coventry by his mess, or to the family-vault by his bosom friend, for a similar display;—while the acuteness of Ulysses in his deception of Polypheme is given as a lesson to those who would be expelled the chancery bar for similar practices. The onerous perils of a breach of promise are neglected while the student is attached by the magic of numbers to the worthless cause of Dido’s or of Ariadne’s lover; and Cicero and Demosthenes are offered as models of eloquence to small senators in corduroy, who would be committed to the sergeant-at-arms, or the care of Dr. Warburton, for attempting to insult the House with cut-and-dried oratory of a similar class!

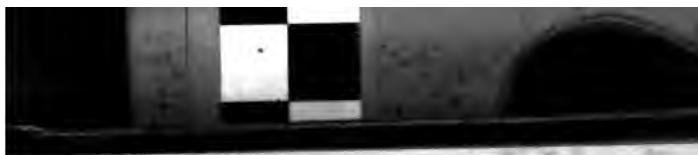
Painters, we are told, are obliged to exaggerate their colouring and introduce gaudy hues upon the canvass, in order to allow for the mellowing hand of time; and on these grounds, it may perhaps be advisable to form the moral qualities of youth, on a gigantic framework. Had Sir Brooke Rawleigh committed to memory at Rugby the adventure of Scævola, with its accompanying notes of admiration, he might not have been so indecorously startled by the burning sealing-wax. Had the implacable Dynley been properly tutored with the mythological warning of the twice-flayed Marsyas, he would not have inflicted a second dose of torture on the innocent member for Martwich!

Nevertheless it appears that the heroic virtues of antiquity are only susceptible of adaptation to our own times, by such cutting and contriving as produces much waste of time and excellence. The fortitude of the Spartan youth who allowed the reptile he had stolen to eat into his heart rather than avow its concealment, was far too big a virtue for Sir Brooke Rawleigh, as he sat agonized by the flower-girl’s importunities behind the Times newspaper, rather than acknowledge his eaves-dropping;—and had Frederica, on arriving at Hampton

Court, and finding the impossibility of escaping Lord Calder's dinner, attempted to ford the Thames after the fashion of the noble Clelia, she would only have caught cold in refrigeration of her superfluous ardour.

The truth is that heroism, magnanimity, fortitude, and other gigantic virtues of the veteran battalion of old moralities, must abate a cubit of their stature in the assumption of the farthingale and hoop, the peruke and frock-coat. It is not to be supposed that Coriolanus would have stood in the marketplace of Martwich in one of Meyer's surtouts; or Marius seated himself among the ruins of St. Martin's-le-Grand in a water-proof hat. Numa Pompilius would have scarcely adventured the rheumatism, had his Egeria been only Martha Gunn in a Brighton bathing-machine;—or Regulus returned to his tortures, had he been disguised as a lady's footman at Granville. Railroads and steam-vessels do not admit the portability of extraneous matter,—even in the exaggeration of virtue;—and human creatures are beginning to contemplate human existence through the wrong, or diminishing end of the telescope. It would be a laudable effort, therefore, if the spirited proprietor of the "Family Library" were to cause one of his domestic philosophers to compile an octavo edition of the folio examples of the antique world, for the use of the clubs and both Houses of Parliament.—But more of this hereafter; our lector and the Rawleighs are waiting!

The hilarity of Sir Brooke was somewhat checked, when, on his return to Bruton-street, he found that the club dinner intended as a punishment to his wife, had been wholly superfluous,—that the patties were the only sufferers,—that Frederica was still away;—and uneasiness soon took the place of resentment in his worthy bosom. The only arrivals since he quitted home, were a pink satin P. P. C. from Mrs. Woodington, who had raised the siege of Launceston, and marched off to Paris after old gouty Lord Twadell;—and a card of invitation,—on whose vast extent Napoleon might have pricked out the plan of his Italian campaigns,—from Mr. and Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House, for a dinner at a month's warning!—Sir Brooke could devise no motive for the tarrying of the wheels of the britschka, except some fatal accident; and having ascertained from Thomas's malicious information, that "the off-wheeler was a rum 'un, and looked queerish,"—he sat himself down to execrate Newman's indiscretion in sending out restive horses; and his own, in having abandoned the protection of his innocent



and unoffending family, to encounter the punch and poundage of the Black Bull!—

Those who have encountered the torture of watching and waiting, hour after hour, for the arrival of a truant,—who know the full force of anguish included in the Italian proverb "*Aspettare chi non viene*," can appreciate the flutter of spirit,—half pain—half pleasure,—which agitated Sir Brooke, when at length an unusual noise in the street and a knock of less than footman's artificiality, announced the arrival of the travelling carriage. It was too dark to look out and observe by whom his wife was accompanied, nor had he much leisure for the inquiry; for with a step fleet as youth, health, and happiness could make it, Frederica bounded up stairs and threw herself into his arms! He had no time for the assumption of dignity,—of the cold, dry, marital, scrutinizing air he had all day projected; *there* she was,—with her arms clinging round his neck,—her heart beating with delight against his own;—and, unless he was much mistaken—a tear transmitted from her cheek to his.

But if a tear, it was only a tear of joy! When at length she drew back her face to contemplate his looks, and utter some of those complaints against the length of his absence which so gently cheer the moment of return, the expressive tenderness which irradiated her eyes and flushed her cheek, could not be mistaken as arising from any impulse but that of unqualified happiness at seeing him again. She had forgotten all her vexations,—all her apprehensions;—she had thrown the showy bonnet irreverently on the floor, while the loosened tresses hung down in unseemly disorder;—she had dragged him back to the easy chair, and was kneeling on the Turkish cushion at his feet;—his hand in hers,—and in her heart all that buoyancy of affection which the formalities of life so rarely allow to exhibit its vivid impulses;—her beautiful countenance embellished by all the playfulness of a child,—by all the tenderness of a wife!—

While Sir Brooke gazed on its captivating brilliancy, its still more subduing softness, he felt the utter impossibility of attaching the stigma of suspicion to such a face, to such a woman. Truth and ingenuousness were written there by the authentic hand of Nature;—he no longer cared or inquired whether Calder had been the companion of her journey home, whether Lord Putney had been agreeable, or Vaux entertaining;—with such an expressive smile beaming from her lips, he would have received her in perfect confidence from a journey with Don Giovanni in an air balloon!—

Between lovers,—wedded lovers, parted and reunited for the first time,—a thousand nothings arise for discussion, which to all other persons, including the novelist and the reader, would be insupportably tedious; and perhaps there is no feeling more characteristic of the charm of arriving at home, and being restored to the society dearest to our hearts, than the certainty that *all* may now be said,—that every word will create an interest—every adventure, sympathy; that instead of assuming the factitious abridgment of general conversation, to be ourselves, and quite ourselves, is to confer a favour as well as a personal relief.

And Frederica was not only herself, and quite herself on this occasion, but never had that self appeared so matchless in the eyes of her husband. There was not the slightest reminiscence of Almack's in the entangled locks of her disordered hair;—not a trace of the Drawing-room in the almost infantile smile through which her white teeth shone with the lustre of pearls. In her unconnected phrases and hurried narratives, no one would have detected her recent companionship with the stately Calder, or the pedantic Vaux; purity of nature superseded the necessity for refinement; and she seemed to come back to her home, as a woman should ever come,—bringing cheerfulness and joy to its inmates! Nothing of “the Honourable Miss Rawdon” moderated her animation,—nothing of “Lady Rawleigh” dignified her aspect;—she was Frederica only—“dearest Frederica!”

Even Martin, when he placed on the table the tea she had asked for on her arrival, forgave her the scorched patties and procrastinated dinner;—and tea being as it were a native dew, an unfailing source of chirruping to the fair gossipers of England,—it was no longer necessary for “poor Rawleigh” to try to possess himself, by force of interrogation, of the itinerary and chronicles of her day of pleasure.

“And so you are really a fraction of the legislation!” cried Frederica, who was now busy with the arrangement of her cup and saucer. “Let me look at you, and see whether you are grown as wise as the man of Thessaly,—whether you wear the dignities of the senate with becoming gravity?—Only so, so!—You have borrowed nothing at present from Mr. Lexley, although you have paid him so largely.—Tell me—”

“Not one word about Martwich or Lexley, if you value my patience,—I have supped full of them;—but rather let me inquire what have you been doing yourself?”

“Everything that is foolish, imprudent, and extravagant;

—I have been committing a thousand follies from mere idleness, and am now ready to repent them with the most assiduous industry."

"No, Fred! you cannot alarm me! I cannot be terrified by confessions uttered with a smile like that.—But what has made you so late?—have you had a pleasant day?"

"Delightful!—that is, the roads were very dusty, the races very tiresome, and the dinner stupid enough. But we had a most charming adventure;—oh! yes! it *was* a *delightful* day!"

Sir Brooke dulcified his tea with additional sugar and cream, exclaiming that it was strong, even to bitterness.

"But Martin tells me," she resumed, "that you arrived at home before I quitted the door.—How was this, dear Rawleigh?—Why did you not stop the carriage?—Even if you were too tired to join our party, you might have allowed me the opportunity of remaining at home with you."

"And lose your *delightful* day?"

"My day has been delightful only in comparison with yesterday and its predecessor, when I was absorbed by a most tiresome occupation—a little secret which you must allow me to keep from you till next week; but you are fully aware that I have lost one far more agreeable through my ignorance of your return. Had you not assured me that you could not possibly arrive in town till to-morrow, I should have had an excellent excuse for Louisa Erskyne. Dearest Rawleigh! are you not ashamed of your own irresolution?"

"Not of my *irresolution*," replied Sir Brooke, involuntarily recurring to the unfair suspicions he had formed touching that secret so frankly announced. "But if I had indeed induced you to give up your engagement, Frederica, what would have become of the adventure?"

"Ah! I had totally forgotten it!—Well, after all,—as you *are* here again and not very likely to make a second journey to Martwich, I think I *am* glad you did not recall me. I dare say I should have been in your way;—I dare say you have been reading letters from Ruggs all day?"

"Not exactly!"

"At least you have not been riding with Lady Lotus,—"

"Do not swear it."

"But I will *protest* to you,—as Romeo says; for Lady Lotus herself,—*your* Lady Lotus,—your own dear Laura—"

"Nay! Frederica, it is now my turn to protest,—"

"*was* the heroine of my adventure."

"I am quite disappointed ;—I expected something romantic or mysterious."

"You shall be amply gratified in both ways, if you will have patience with my story. You are to know that by some strange mistake,—by the attraction I suppose which is called negative,—our carriage was posted on the course next to that of your *bella e gloriosa donna*; a circumstance not likely to be agreeable to me at any time, and peculiarly unwelcome to-day, because she thought proper to amuse herself by making inquiries in a voice like the roar of a bison, about my friend Mrs. Waddlestone—'my interesting friend Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone;' to the infinite vexation of Louisa Erskyne, who perceived that the sound attracted the notice of the neighbouring carriages, and to the infinite disgust of Lord Calder, who saw that she was only intent on mortifying and annoying me."

"Very silly, and very ill-bred !—but take breath, you are on the verge of getting angry."

"Angry ! I was furious !" said Frederica with a smile of the gentlest grace. "But really when I saw her little old quiz of a Sir Christopher put its yellow head out of the collar of its coat, like a tortoise on a sunshiny morning, I thought of you, Rawleigh, and forgave her petulance. I do not wonder that she dislikes me."

"I should, very much,—if I thought such a thing possible," said Rawleigh kindly. "But go on."

"In the course of the morning, Lady Lotus was not much amended in her favourable dispositions towards me; for thanks to the abundance of our popularity or our Champagne, Mrs. Erskyne's carriage was constantly surrounded with fashionable visitors, while that of the Lotus was surrounded with outriders, and nothing else."

"No asperity, Fred."

"Poor woman !—I am very little inclined to be ill-natured concerning her; for she became a severe sufferer in the sequel."

"Indeed ?"

"No *partiality*, Rawleigh;—she deserved all the punishment she received."

"Poetical justice !"

"Poetical ? with that little lump of prose by her side !"

"Order !—order !—my dear Frederica, and proceed with your explanation."

"When the time came to put to the horses that we might return to town, Lady Lotus, who had followed us down, and

probably swallowed more road-dust than was agreeable to a person accustomed to see nothing but gold-dust, resolved that she would at least precede us on our way home; and I perceived her repeatedly whisper to her servants in a singular manner, and her servants to the post-boys."

"Giving them orders to take the lead?"

"Exactly!—but without perceiving that the position in which the carriages stood, rendered it impossible to extricate either without much temper or—much danger. The moment her horses were set in motion our wheels became locked; and while Louisa and I screamed to them to stop, *your* Lady Lotus kept urging them on. At length, one or two taxed carts round us made off to leave plenty of room for the mischief!—I was terrified to death!"

"Foolish woman!"

"I trust *that* is intended for Laura!—Well, you do not appear alarmed?—I have a strong inclination to leave off like Scheherazade by way of retribution."

"How can I feel alarmed?—Do I not find you here safe by my side?"

"But you are by no means certain that poor Lady Lotus is not dying of *her* contusions at the inn at Moulsey."

"I have *too much* confidence in your Christian mercy to be apprehensive."

"Well then, the affair ended by the two carriages being dragged down the hill together, with their horses plunging and their inmates shrieking, till at length Sir Christopher's wheel came off in the struggle; and when I had courage to open my eyes after the crash, I saw Mr. Vaux trying to lift up the overturned barouche; while Lord Putney was assisting Lady Lotus out of the dust, and a stranger was trying to persuade the little old man—who was rolled up like the millepedes,—to uncurl himself and own he was unhurt, which fortunately he could do with a very safe conscience."

"What an absurd affair! I really thought Lady Lotus had more sense. But what became of them,—for I conclude their carriage was too much broken to take them back to town."

"We were in a horrible fright lest we should be obliged to crowd them into ours; when I had the satisfaction of hearing the stranger offer them the use of his phaeton."

"But who and what were the stranger and his phaeton?"

"Both dark, both handsome, and both mysterious; the carriage, however, was new, and its owner older than Lord Calder. Both had been stationed close before us on the



course, and formed a subject of conjecture to us in our intervals of idleness ;—we could not understand how a person so remarkably distinguished-looking could be a total stranger to our whole party and its visitors."

"And did you make out? Have you discovered this great unknown?"

"Not in the least; although, to gratify our curiosity we persuaded him to accept the vacant seat in our carriage as far as Hampton Court, where he said he was engaged to dinner; and I had the affliction of seeing his phaeton drive off with Lady Lotus sobbing, and Sir Christopher as dumb as a dormouse, without the possibility of asking her in his presence to whom she was indebted for so much good-nature."

"But in a half-hour's drive, surely two such deter~~mined~~ women as Mrs. William Erskyne and yourself were enabled to defraud a man of his name?"

"No—we discovered only that our handsome stranger was very well informed, highly bred, and extremely intelligent;—but whether a Duke incognito, or the King's head-cook, remains a problem."

"But if he were a man of any consideration, Calder would have known him by sight."

"And so he did,—perfectly; but could not recollect where his person had become familiar to him. Mr. Vaux, too, remembered having repeatedly met him. And when we stopped at the Palace, Lord Calder was so much pleased with his manners and conversation that he even begged him to join our little party."

"Rather a rash measure with a perfect stranger."

"So he seemed to think; but he excused himself with great self-possession and politeness."

"Perhaps he thought that he had got into strange company."

"No, indeed!—for when he first came up to our carriage, immediately after the accident, and found me crying, he exclaimed, 'Pray Lady Rawleigh do not alarm yourself; believe me, your friends are more frightened than hurt.'"

"And you are *sure* you never saw this captivating personage before?" said Sir Brooke, looking fixedly at his wife.

"Quite certain,—or I *must* have been struck by his very superior attractions."

"Umph!—a strange business altogether. And did you see no more of him?"

"Oh! yes,—a great deal;—after dinner we walked in the palace-gardens till the horses were ready;—and in one of the

most remote avenues, walking quite alone in a mood of sentimental melancholy like Penruddock's,—we overtook our lost treasure."

"Who instantly joined you?"

"No!—we joined him; and would not be shaken off till we walked him back to the palace; and he put us all into the carriage, apparently very glad to get rid of our importunities."

"Neither Vaux nor Calder are men whose society is considered unacceptable."

"Nor are Louisa Erskyne and Frederica Rawleigh persons usually shunned by the male creation," said her ladyship, smiling archly at his want of courtesy. "And I must confess that for my own part I tried to make myself as agreeable and conciliating as I possibly could, not only to rival Penruddock's attraction with our party, but to tempt him to discover himself."

"Miss Elbany was right this morning, Frederica! You certainly *are* candid amid all your indiscretions."

"Miss Elbany venture a remark to *you* on my character!—how extremely impertinent! And *this* morning!—You told me you had not yet seen mamma."

"I did not disturb Lady Launceston; but I sat in Charles-street nearly an hour."

"You must have found the society of that girl extremely attractive."

"I did indeed, Fred.!—almost as fascinating as that of the mysterious unknown of Moulsey Hurst."

"What could she find to say to you that lasted a whole hour?"

"To utter your praises!"

"I am highly flattered by her officious politeness; I should be much obliged to her to find a more willing theme for her sickening encomiums."

"My dear, you are very far from just towards that poor girl.—As she herself observed, you have done nothing but insult her ever since you arrived in town."

"She contrived then to mingle *some* blame in her very prolix eulogies! I am beginning to wonder less that you did not stop the carriage this morning, now I find you had so excellent an occasion to amuse yourself. Even Rugg's accounts cannot rival the attractions of Miss Elbany."

"As I told you before, my love, you are strangely prejudiced against that poor girl!—and only because she is twice as handsome, and clever, and agreeable, as any woman we

Meet in society. It is not her fault that your mother is so partial to her, and Launceston so much in love with her. But I shall certainly take him to task the first time I get hold of him alone; for if, as you say, he is engaged to this tallow-chandler's daughter, he has no right to sport as he does with Lucy's feelings."

"How do you know he sports with her?—Was Launceston in Charles-street this morning?"

"No!—we were quite alone."

What angry rejoinder might have broken from the lovely lips of Frederica, it is impossible to guess, had not Martin at that moment entered the room to take away the tray.

By way of exhausting her vein of displeasure on some ~~more~~ legitimate subject, she now examined Mrs. Waddlestone's presumptuous card of invitation with an air of as much abhorrence as if it had been steeped in the unctuous caldron of her husband's speculative commerce; and with Sir Brooke's consent, sat down to indite a negative reply, as frigid as if it emanated from those icy depositories which have already served to adorn these pages with the far-famed names of Robert Gunter and Co.

## CHAPTER XIX.

I oft have heard him say how he admired  
Men of the large profession, who could speak  
To every cause, and things mere contraries,  
Till they were hoarse again.

JONSON'S VOLPONE.

It is a very remarkable circumstance that the transition from the electoral body to the senate, from the population to the legislation, from the taxee to the taxor, from the licentious to the licensed proser, produces a much greater change in any man who is likely to pass through the House with as little notice as a turnpike-bill, than in one whose qualities are of a nature to attract the attention and admiration of the king, lords, and commons. Fox or Sheridan, Hobhouse or Peel, may have been scarcely conscious of this change in their estate,—for whether representing or represented, their eminence is of an unquestionable degree; but it is astonishing the difference produced in the tone of a Sir Brooke Rawleigh by the letters M. and P.—in appendix to his name!

It has been already asserted, without any intended disparagement of the honourable member for Martwich, that although a man of good abilities,—*good*, because equal to every demand arising in the station of life allotted to him by Providence,—he was far from a brilliant man. He had a sound head and a sound heart, and was as little likely to attract the attention of the world by excesses or absurdities, as by the display of marvellous intellectual endowments; and although no more than on a par with four out of eight men of his own condition,—as they may be rated by their conversation at the dinner-tables of western London,—he never said a silly thing, nor was guilty of an exceptionable action. Happy the state which boasts a majority of such citizens among her sons!

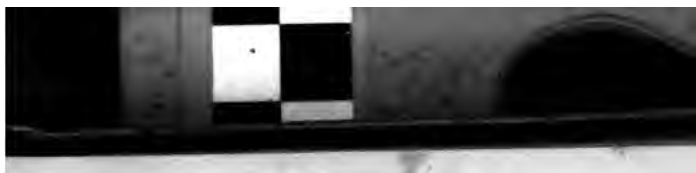
Perhaps there is no country in Europe where the general excellence of education redeems and cultivates mediocrity of mind into such valuable qualities as England. A free government and a liberal faith, by affording exercise to the faculties thus produced, combine to elevate them into importance; and

the man who in France would become a mere sensualist, in Austria a brute, in Spain a bigot, in Italy a villain or a nonentity, is trained by the English system of education into a useful country gentleman, and a valuable member of society.

Such was Sir Brooke Rawleigh;—such had he been ever taught to believe himself by the esteem of his neighbourhood, the respect of his household, the admiration of Lady Derenzy and her sister, and the favourable acceptance of society at large. But the main point of his intellectual deficiency was want of decision;—he had the elements of judgment in his mind,—clearness of perception and a strong sense of right,—but he wanted the power of bringing them together for use, and the self-reliance which affixes the die of currency to real ability. The Emperor Joseph II., in despatching his edicts to the states of his extensive empire, is said to have invariably accompanied the mandate with a second courier bearing its amendment or suspension; and Sir Brooke never hazarded an important opinion, without the addition of a species of “errors excepted” clause,—destroying the whole authority of his words.

But so long as his career was limited to a subordinate march of existence, where his infirmity of purpose was unimportant to the world and therefore invisible to himself, he remained on easy terms with his own understanding; checking Mr. Ruggs, lecturing the improvident Launceston, gratifying his neighbours Lord Lawford and Lord Huntingfield with an equality of intellect united with considerable diffidence in its exertion, and amazing Mrs. Martha Derenzy and her coterie with his prodigious information on agricultural and political topics. The rector of Rawleighford, Dr. Fisher, was the only person capable of appreciating the deficiency in the mental powers of his patron; but like most men who have achieved the dignity of the buzz wig, he attributed the fault solely to the extreme youth of Sir Brooke, whom—at nine-and-twenty—his sexagenarian soul regarded as a promising boy. He was, besides, a worthy man, and a conscientious divine; and was too well aware of the value of his young friend’s moral qualities, not to venerate him infinitely more than if he had been capable of a political squib, or a popular romance.

But the time was now come for Sir Brooke Rawleigh to form a painful appraisement of his own powers; and perhaps there is no species of personal humiliation so grievous to a man’s feelings, and so pernicious to his temper, as that which arises without the malicious intervention of others. He had



always expected to derive considerable self-importance from his seat in Parliament: instead of which, he became lowered in his own esteem on taking his place among his peers. A country gentleman of good estate, living at the end of his own avenue,—a Colossus to his tenants, a Solon to his steward, a Chesterfield to his clerical incumbent,—is at once the most independent and the most self-satisfied of human beings.—He is a species of perpetual dictator. Unharassed by the contraries of a factious and fractious Parliament, unmolested by the intrigues of a mayor of the palace, he may exclaim from his authoratative library chair

Here is my throne,—kings come and bow to it!

But this pleasing delusion ends at Hyde-park-corner; and once installed in the Chapel of St. Stephen's is stifled as a disgraceful and fatuitous error within the soul of the enlightened landholder. Napoleon invited Talma to Erfurt to "act before a pitful of kings;"—and a country member finds himself reduced to his natural level in a housefull of squires.

It was not, however, the consciousness arising from this species of social extinction, from the companionship of such landed proprietors as the Russells, Beaumonts, Hugheses, Whitmores, Westerns, Fawkeses, Sebrights, Cokes, or Sumners, that Sir Brooke Rawleigh derived his more authenticated notions of his own consequence. It was from the discovery that he was now incorporated in a body where his voice was only endurable in the utterance of "Ay," or "No;" where his opinion was without influence, and his presence without interest!

It is generally to be observed that persons whose spirit is unduly repressed in one place, award themselves a liberal compensation by its exercise in another. In proportion, accordingly, as Sir Brooke Rawleigh became conscious of the mortifications of his political subordination in the House of Commons, he began to augment his importance in his house in Bruton-street;—considering it necessary to maintain his personal dignity as the master of Rawleighford,—as the heir-presumptive of the Derenzys, and the husband of the beautiful Frederica Rawdon.

He was not conscious of the alterations in his views and demeanour, whereby he ran so much risk of growing disagreeable and ridiculous; nor did the partial affection of his wife admit of her becoming more enlightened than himself in this particular; but one point of the change operated in his

domestic position by his senatorial duties, could escape neither Frederica's notice nor her regret; the daily-recurring absence, ensured by the diligent attention of the new member to his public duties,—and the hurry and weariness of spirit with which he at length returned to the comforts of home and the society of his wife. No wonder that she should seek refuge from the solitary dulness of her deserted dwelling in the amusements fitted to her age;—in the animated sallies of Mrs. Erskyne's conversation, and the flattering blandishments of Lord Calder's devotion.

It was some days after the adventure and misadventure of the Hampton races, that Lady Rawdon, among the duties of her morning drive, projected a visit to Mrs. Martha Derenzy; an incident which usually acted as a soporific for the rest of the day. If Lady Launceston's mansion exhibited the awful stillness of elegant valetudinarianism, Mrs. Martha's was more than equally paralyzed by the utter stagnation of dulness and mediocrity. The house itself stood on what is called the shady side of the street, in order to avoid the rare enlivenment of a straggling London sunbeam; the attendants were cased in suits of sober pepper-and-salt;—the floors were carpeted with gray drugget; a moping linnet hung in one corner of the sepulchral drawing-room, apparently infected by the dinginess of its cage, and sobriety of its attendants;—two portraits of Luther and Melancthon were supended in black frames from the slate-coloured wall;—and in the gloomiest corner of this gloomy apartment, at a table covered with faded green baize, sat Mrs. Martha Derenzy and her worsted work! It was not that her three thousand per annum was so exclusively devoted to the support of the charitable institutions, in whose printed lists she was somewhat superabundantly fond of observing her own name, which produced these penurious characteristics in herself and her appurtenances;—but she was an enemy to all innovation.—Undisturbed by the cares of matrimony and maternity, she had vegetated for the space of sixty-four years in that very abode; and considering it a sort of respectful testimony to the memory of the old dowager grandmother Derenzy by whom she had been brought up, to maintain everything precisely in the same order she had noticed it half a century before, Mrs. Martha was careful that even the drugget and the baize, and the linnet, when worn out by the natural progress of years, should always be renewed in the exact shade of their original dinginess.

In such a spot as this, the youthful beauty of Lady Rawleigh seemed to acquire an almost unnatural radiance, and

her voice to awake to an echo of gladness such as those walls were rarely taxed to reverberate. Nor was the old lady herself insensible to the charm. The only feelings of sensibility in which she had ever been known to indulge were lavished on her only sister, the mother of Sir Brooke, from whom they had been transferred to her exemplary nephew; while the entire respect and wonderment of her mind were engrossed by Lady Derenzy, the wife and widow of her elder brother. It was the knowledge of this partiality which had postponed Frederica's visit to Queen-Anne-street, ever since the fatal offence of the drawing-room.

"Well my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she, replacing her spectacles in their well worn morocco case, "I was afraid you had forgotten me. I have never once seen you to wish you joy on our dear Brooke's advancement. I was saying last night to Miss Hunter, during the deal—for I generally manage to make up my cassino table, notwithstanding the gay doings that are going on—said I, any one might think my niece had got into Parliament instead of my nephew, for I have quite lost sight of her; and Miss Hunter could not for the life of her help laughing."

"I have been half afraid to call here," said Frederica, frankly, "being aware that I was so unfortunate as to offend Lady Derenzy in the affair about Mrs. Waddlestone. Nothing would grieve me more than to displease any of my husband's relations; but in this instance I had to choose between wounding the feelings of my brother, and losing the good opinion of a mere connection."

"And your decision, Lady Rawleigh, did you honour. Our dear Sophronia is a noble creature; I do not suppose that the court of Great Britain has at any time boasted among its aristocracy so brilliant an example of beauty, elegance, talents, accomplishments, and high-breeding; and I am well aware that whenever my sister-in-law deigns to show herself in society, every one is anxious to receive the law from her lips, on all points of fashionable etiquette."

Lady Rawleigh with difficulty repressed a smile, as she contrasted this florid family portrait with the harsh reality of Lady Derenzy's withered person and obsolete address.

"But Sophronia has her prejudices. Engrossed by her studies and contemplations, it would be disagreeable to her to live (as I do) in the centre of the gay world; and it would be requiring too much of her to conform (as I do) to the habits of the new generation. When my sister-in-law expressed her displeasure at the condescension you were pleased



to show to Mrs. Waddlestone, she was not aware, my dear, that you were first tempted to make her acquaintance at our cousin Mrs. Luttrell's, or that it was *myself* who engaged you to pay her the first visit. All this has been properly explained; and Sophronia has restored you to favour on learning that you were solely influenced in your conduct by deference to the opinion of the elder branches of the family."

Frederica was not quite prepared for the turn given by Mrs. Derenzy to her proceedings; but she was very willing to accept an interpretation which rescued for the present the name of her brother from implication in the business. Having found from Launceston's confessions that he had not yet made his proposals to the soapboiler, but was admitted into the family merely as a lover on probation, she was still in hopes that some more honourable method might be discovered to retrieve the fortunes of the spendthrift, than that of dishonouring his family by a plebeian alliance of so unsatisfactory a nature.

"And now, my dear madam, I am come after all only to bid you good bye," said Lady Rawleigh, when she could gain an interval from Miss Hunter's sayings and Mrs. Watt's doings; "I am going to-morrow out of town."

"You amaze me!—When the late Mr. Rawleigh sat for Droitwich, my poor dear sister made it a point never to leave London till the end of the session. You amaze me!"

"Oh! I have no thoughts of Warwickshire at present; I am only projecting a visit of a few days to my aunt Olivia, who has a very pretty place in Essex, and is about to give a breakfast at which she wishes me to preside. We were both anxious that Rawleigh should contrive to accompany me; but he assures me it is totally impossible, and Lady Olivia is so eager for the fête, that I am under the necessity of leaving him."

Frederica was surprized to observe that this intelligence produced in Mrs. Derenzy something more nearly resembling agitation than she could have anticipated. The old lady opened her spectacle-case, shut it again, displaced her balls of worsted, half rose from her seat, and after various little preparatory hems, observed in reply, "I think, my dear niece, although we have not yet been quite a year acquainted, you will do me the justice to acknowledge that you have never observed any symptoms of mischief-making in my character."

Lady Rawleigh, somewhat awed by this oracular preamble, assented with a clear conscience to the proposition.



"Although I have myself thought fit to abstain from entering into the marriage state," said Mrs. Martha, "no woman in this world is more profoundly penetrated with the sacredness of the institution, or the sin of attempting to disturb the confidence and happiness of wedlock."

Frederica, who began to suspect that Rawleigh had commissioned his aunt to read her a little lecture of warning on the subject of Lord Calder's attentions, prepared herself to listen with becoming deference to an exercise of family eloquence which, however superfluous, was well-meant, and inoffensive in a tête-à-tête. But no sooner had she placed herself in a posture of attention, than Mrs. Derenzy inquired whether she happened to be intimately acquainted with Lady Huntingfield.

"She is one of my Rawleighford neighbours, and a person whom I highly respect. But I fear I am not a favourite; I suspect I have taken a place which she wished might fall to the lot of her own daughter, Lady Margaret Fieldham."

"Quite a mistake I assure you! She was saying here, only yesterday, that she was thankful *her* daughter's happiness had not been compromised by an union with my nephew."

"She might have waited for some expression of Rawleigh's inclinations on such a subject."

"Ah! my dear!" said Mrs. Derenzy, shaking her head.

"You quite alarm me!"

"I fear he has been *much* to blame."

"Who has been to blame!—not Sir Brooke I am certain."

"Your infatuation does *you* honour; but it only aggravates his fault."

"Dear Mrs. Derenzy,—pray be more explicit."

"Young men, I have always heard, *will* be young men;—but I must say I *did* entertain a different opinion of my nephew!—so lately married,—so charming a wife!"

"You will drive me to distraction by all this mystery! What *has* Rawleigh been about? What mischief has Lady Huntingfield been inventing concerning my husband?"

"My dear niece, Lady Huntingfield is incapable of a malicious action;—she is a very serious woman—"

"A very serious evil on this occasion."

"And she was the best friend and neighbour my poor dear late sister ever had. It was a view to such interference on my part as might perhaps work a reformation in the conduct of my deluded nephew, which alone induced her to favour me with her confidence."

It was now Lady Rawleigh's turn to seize on the spectacle-case, which she opened and shut with unconscious vehemence.

"If I am not mistaken, my dear Ma'am, there is a young person of some personal attractions resident in the family of your mamma?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frederica, starting up. "It is not possible that Rawleigh can have attached himself to that horrible Miss Elbany?" and she wrung her hands at the mere supposition.

"The very person!" ejaculated Mrs. Martha.

"I do not believe a single word of it," cried Lady Rawleigh, with spirit.

"Nay! my dear niece,—far be it from me to shake your amiable incredulity;—I respect your blindness,—I love your obstinacy on such an occasion; nor would any circumstance less peremptory than your departure from town, leaving my nephew open to the allurements of that misguided young woman, have unsealed my lips. It is not that I suspect any positive guilt, any moral turpitude in their conduct;—still, decorum *is* to be respected, Lady Rawleigh,—decorum *is* to be respected; and indeed, my dear ma'am, it does *not* look well for the credit of either Lady Launceston's house or Sir Brooke's character, that my nephew should be caught in the act of imprinting—but, pardon me the rest!—Delicacy would willingly gloss over an incident so unbecoming to all parties."

"No—no!—pray speak out—" panted Frederica, "since you have opened my eyes, oblige me by letting me know the worst. Who is the person who was so fortunate as to witness—" she stopped and burst into tears.

"Oh! dear—dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Derenzy, "what a pity that you should agitate yourself in this silly manner for a trifle! After all, it might have been only an act of politeness on my nephew's part; to be sure one must feel that it—does—seem a little odd that Lady Huntingfield, and the butler, and poor quiet innocent Lady Margaret Fieldham, should happen to have entered the drawing-room at the very moment of such a crisis;—and very silly they did all look it must be admitted. Lady Huntingfield declares that *she* never received a salute of that description in the whole course of her life."

"All this must be explained!" cried Frederica, drying her eyes and rising from her seat. "I will go to mamma,—I will appeal to Rawleigh,—I will not tamely submit to—"

"Hush! hush! my dear niece be pacified!" said Mrs.

Martha, offering her a bottle of eau de luce, which looked like a wedding present from Sir Charles Grandison to Harriet Byron. "Remember I must not have a single syllable of this business divulged,—remember I have confided it to you with a full trust in your honour. Reflect my dear ma'am, on what might be the consequences of a disclosure!—A duel between your deluded husband and Lord Huntingfield,—a separation between Lord Huntingfield and his lady,—an irreconcilable quarrel between my nephew and myself; and last of all, this giddy young woman—who after all may be more indiscreet than culpable—thrown out of bread."

"Thrown out of bread!" reiterated Lady Rawleigh, who at that moment could have found it in her heart to order her rival thrown out of the window.

"For my sake, I really must insist on your silence; and for your own, accept an old woman's advice, and do not leave London;—do not again expose your husband to the snares of a Delilah!"

"Well—well!—I see I must obey your commands, and accept your counsel," said Frederica, eager to get beyond the reach of observation, and indulge the paroxysms of tears now struggling in her bosom. "Good bye, Mrs. Derenzy; I will think of what you have so delicately and considerately acquainted me with, no more than is necessary for the regulation of my own conduct.—Good bye!" and without listening to the elaborate addenda which Rawleigh's aunt seemed anxious to charge on the catalogue of his enormities, she flew down stairs at a rate which caused the reverend domestics to tremble with consternation; and getting into her carriage, caused it to be driven to the most remote wilds of the Regent's-park. Like Cassius, she longed to "weep her spirit from her eyes."—She felt not the pavement as she passed;—she was unconscious of the vehemence with which she drew down the blinds, and threw herself into a corner of the chariot;—she noted not the pause at the turnpike,—the jerk with which they entered the iron gates;—she felt nothing but the tumultuous beating of her heart;—she heard nothing but the ocean-like hissing which seemed as if some heavy piece of ordnance had just pealed in her ears!

Such hypocrisy—such treachery!—Rawleigh so severe in his strictures on laxity of morals in other people;—professing such a devotion of attachment to herself,—such a respect for her mother,—such a deference to the opinion of the world!—A second Angelo;—a vile imposter on the respect of society,—a traitor to the tenderness of her own bosom!

And how, after all, was she to act in such a delicate dilemma?—Was there one human creature to whom she could deliberately confide the frailty of her husband and her own despair? It was needless of Mrs. Derenzy to qualify the mischief she had made by exacting a promise of secrecy on Frederica's part;—worlds would not have tempted her to utter a syllable in disparagement of her once loved, but faithless Rawleigh. Not that *she* felt the slightest displeasure against the officious aunt;—she was very far from cherishing Othello's opinion that "It is better to be much abused than but to know't a little."—She resolved to know all,—to see all,—to assure herself of the worst by the utmost precaution of observation; and then,—no matter!—the time, the occasion would bring its own tremendous verdict on the transaction!

Next to the impulse of concealing her husband's dishonour, was that of disguising her own sufferings on the occasion; and it is astonishing how potently the pride of a female heart will operate in the suppression of grief, indignation, and even jealousy. Lady Rawleigh had long been engaged to visit Sir Thomas Lawrence's private gallery that morning, on the introduction of Lord Calder, and in company with Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne; for his lordship was too well practised in his art to allow her to suppose *herself* his object even in a party of pleasure. To make her appearance before these heartless and satirical people as a poor, weeping, neglected, injured wife, was out of the question; Mrs. Erskyne cherished about as much feeling in her bosom as in the diamond Sevigné that glittered thereon,—Calder had more than once hazarded an inferential sneer on her domestic susceptibility,—and Lady Rochester would have regarded her emotions on such a provocation as too homely for anything but a housemaid!—No,—no!—She applied her handkerchief to her eyes for the last time; drew up the blinds to refresh them with a current of air; and rehearsing a little hysterical laugh as a trial of self-possession on passing Gloucester Gate,—desired the coachman, in a voice like the croak of a wood-pigeon, to drive to Russell-square. Lord Calder was conducting his sister up the steps of Sir Thomas's door at the moment she arrived; and on entering the gallery they found Louisa Erskyne already waiting. Without occupation or interest beyond the excitement of the day's amusement, her restless spirit always prompted her to be beforehand on such occasions.

"You are indisposed?" said Lord Calder in an anxious under tone to Lady Rawleigh as they entered the room, in

which the great artist had not yet made his appearance. "I fear you were persuaded to stay too late last night at Lady Blanche Thornton's!—Nothing can be so injudicious as to protract one night's amusement so as to interfere with the pleasures of the following day;—when next you find yourself yielding to the importunities of an officious hostess, remember the advice of an old epicurean and your headache of to-day, —and resist!"

"I have a wretched cold, for which I fancy I may thank our evening walk at Hampton Court last week," said Frederica, trying to rally her spirits; "but do not ask me to remember it, when once it is cured and forgotten."

"I might perhaps find it difficult to banish from my recollection anything connected with such a day of happiness," he murmured, drawing back to let her pass through the open doors of the gallery; "but I could wish it had been less disagreeably preserved from oblivion with yourself."

Sir Thomas Lawrence, who boasted a friend as well as a patron in the munificent Calder, now made his appearance; directing his attentions to Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne, with whom he was well acquainted, with all the graceful assiduity which distinguished his address; and receiving his lordship's presentation to Lady Rawleigh with a degree of scrutiny in his looks, plainly betraying that his painter's eye had been favourably prepared for her beauty. Although too cautious to allow even a glance of disappointment to escape him, it is probable that Frederica's ill-assured address and swollen eyelids impressed the refined president with a very moderate estimate of her charms. Except in the instance of Lebrun's celebrated picture of Madame de la Vallière weeping in her carmelite costume over the jewels she is about to resign, so lachrymose a visage never attracted the admiration of a painter! But scarcely was the introduction over and followed by the formal compliments mutually due, when the little party was startled from its task of admiring investigation by the arrival of an intruder. On turning from a half-finished picture of Lady Barbara Dynley, Frederica observed Sir Thomas in the act of shaking hands with the mysterious Hampton friend; while Lord Calder was receiving his bow of distant recognition with an air of gratified urbanity. Could she have effaced from her recollection the odious incident recently engaven there by Mrs. Derenzy, she would have now been happy; for till the moment of her discoveries concerning Miss Elbany and her cruel Rawleigh, nothing had been nearer her heart than to renew her acquaintance with the stranger of the Lotus adventure.

## CHAPTER XX.

After, her looks grew cheerful, and I saw  
 A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes ;  
 As if they gained a victory o'er grief.

SHIRLEY.

Nothing promised however at present in favour of an elucidation. Sir Thomas Lawrence, perceiving from the recognition among his visitors that a previous acquaintance existed among them, did not dream of an introduction; and although Mrs. Erskyne, whose curiosity was piqued on the subject even more than that of Frederica, lent a vigilant ear to ascertain whether any sound resembling your grace, or your lordship, escaped the painter's lips in addressing his anonymous guest, nothing transpired in the way of a personal interpretation.—But it was evident that the stranger and the president were on terms of too cordial a friendship to admit of any such formalities of conventional deference. Mrs. Erskyne still felt at liberty to believe him a royal highness if she chose. In the mean time, with the restless coquetry which distinguished all her movements, she attached herself to Sir Thomas, as to the lion of the moment; and while she affected to demand his notes of explanation for the instruction of Lady Rochester, who was looking at the pictures through a quizzing-glass longing to ascertain the proportions in which carmine and vermilion were introduced to produce the brilliancy of complexion in the Duchess of Richmond's exquisite portrait, she forcibly withdrew his attention from the group on which it would have been so much more usefully and satisfactorily bestowed; and whose critical progress through the gallery he was compelled to hear in tantalizing fragments. He perceived that Lord Calder was in a mood of unusual loquacity, and exerting his conversational powers to the utmost.

There can scarcely be a greater misfortune to a man, and those with whom he is destined to live in contact, than to be of sufficient importance, whether from rank or opulence, to sanction his being disagreeable whenever it suits his convenience.—Lord Calder was gifted with considerable mental

powers, enhanced by cultivation, and prepared for active service by extensive intercourse with society. He was an elegant scholar,—had read much,—could talk well and plausibly on most subjects; and if superficial in his reasoning, and averse to profound disquisition, what was to be expected from a man with eighty thousand a-year, one of the oldest patents in the peerage, unimpaired health, and an unencumbered person!—What leisure had such a favourite of fortune for the subtilities of logic, and the severities of research?

But unfortunately he found so many persons with whom he was in the habit of associating, contented to accept in conversation the minimum of his faculties, eager to applaud his slipshod common-place, and to extol with ecstasy his poorest attempts at pleasantry, that he experienced no temptation to tax his intellectual stores to exhaustion for their amusement.

Like Quin, in his barn days, he was satisfied to play Othello *white* to a meagre audience. Nor was his lordship less economical of his powers of pleasing, than of his powers of entertaining; he was one of those individuals designated as “not *generally* agreeable;”—a definition usually applied to selfish and ill-tempered persons who are of sufficient consequence to disregard the feelings of their associates.

He was not, however, enamoured of his solitary reign.—Like Selkirk on his island, or Haroun Al Raschid on his throne, he was disgusted with his inert supremacy; and it was delightful to him to encounter an auditor worthy his exertions,—a combatant deserving his lance. On finding in the stranger a man of polished mind and exquisite judgment, he hastened to seize his idle spear; and with the greater eagerness that Frederica’s presence would animate his arguments. Alas! he little imagined that *her* mind was wandering between Mrs. Derenzy’s slate-coloured drawing-room, and the revolting scene of Sir Brooke Rawleigh’s furtive indiscretions!

“I own it provokes me,” said Lord Calder, glancing from the Satan of the president’s gallery to the portrait of old Mrs. Locke, which still graced the easel, “to hear the general outcry raised by the critics against portrait-painting, in favour of the historical school; and the regrets annually doled out at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, that our gifted friend should have restricted himself to yonder specimen of his poetical inspiration, and devoted his abilities to the production of such works as this exquisite head.”

“Professional critics,” said the unknown visitor, “are seldom disinterested. The progress of our National School of Art is of very little importance in their eyes, or they would



admit that in perfecting the department of portrait-painting we assure the first step towards the establishment of a higher order of art. It is as the acquirement of facility of versification to a poet. Our century has scarcely yet reached the dignity of historical composition; but the rudiments of such an achievement exist just now in England with a far more brilliant promise than in any continental country."

"The merit of the English school of portrait-painting is as honestly recognized at Rome as the eminence of Thorwaldsen or Canova;—I have seen the Italian cognoscenti hanging over Lawrence's miraculous picture of Gonsalvi, as if they would penetrate into the secrets of his art," said Lord Calder.

"And yet there are frondeurs in Italy against the English tone of colouring;—men who look upon Rubens as a caricaturist, and esteem both Reynolds and Lawrence to be merely modified imitators of his extravagance. They talk of "fluttering," and "patchiness," and "want of harmony," and say that such vivid tints are neither to be found in the faces of Titian's nor of nature's manufacture. And they are right!—*Their* Italian experience *has* never established such precedents in their mind;—their fervid skies and inert habits of life are little calculated to produce a similar freshness."

"It must indeed be admitted that England alone affords us the charm of such complexions as these," said Lord Calder, looking round on the female portraits, but eventually directing his smile towards Frederica's blushing face. "The diet of the French,—the stove of the Germans and Russians,—the atmosphere of the Italians,—are fatal to the bloom of a female face, and the manly vigour of the masculine countenance; while our excess of field exercise, and the simplicity of our mode of nourishment, produces a higher tone of colouring. Even the most beautiful faces one sees on the Continent, are either bronzed by the sunshine of Italy, or rendered pasty and heavy by the oppression of over-heated apartments. There is not a country in Europe where youth lingers so long upon the countenance as England."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the stranger, with the air of a travelled man. "And exquisite as we must admit the portraits of the Venetian school, as well as those of Raphael, Leonardo, and Guido, we may also assure ourselves that such portraits would not have been painted in England; and that the great masters of Italy must have adopted a totally different tone and mode of colouring, had they become acquainted with



nature in a harvest-field on the banks of the Severn, or a drawing-room on the banks of the Thames."

"This deduction is confirmed by the works of modern English artists who have been some time resident abroad;" said Lord Calder. "Look at the pictures exhibited by Briggs, Davis, Partridge, and others, on their first arrival after a long estrangement from the brilliant colouring of British health."

"Vandyke affords perhaps the happiest medium," said the stranger; "a man acquainted with nature in all her disguises, yet apparently born only to perpetuate the fairest, and noblest, and most poetical of her human productions."

"In one point," observed Lord Calder, lowering his voice to a confidential pitch, "in one point, without even instituting a comparison touching the execution and mere painting of their pictures, we must acknowledge the superiority of Charles's artist over our own. Vandyke,—the most courtly of painters,—whose subjects always appear to have stood on a velvet footcloth to the sound of trumpets,—has the art of giving dignity without intellectuality;—his princes are lofty and graceful, without displaying more speculation in their eyes than is hereditary with the right divine. But our friend Lawrence is too apt to endow *his* sitters with his own elegance of mind;—all his female portraits beam with the sensibility of Psyche,—and all his male countenances appear instinct with genius."

"He has certainly irradiated the ponderous stupidity of more than one lordly visage," said the stranger, with a smile. "But look at Raeburn's portraits.—Accustomed to the intense and contemplative gaze of his Edinburgh contemporaries, he taught his lordlings to look as if they were busy with a problem; while we involuntarily associate a pair of blue stockings with the fairest of his female faces."

"An insurmountable blemish!" cried Lord Calder; again directing his eyes towards the pure and unpretending loveliness of Frederica which borrowed much of its charm from the uncultivated simplicity of mind which abandoned every feature to the guileless impulses of her heart,—as if anxious to include her in their discourse,—as if unwilling to lose, even for the sake of an enlightened and unaccustomed companion, the smiles of such a face. But Lady Rawleigh, while she raised her dim eyes towards the masterpieces before her, had no interest in their excellence, no curiosity touching the conversation by which her two companions were engrossed; and notwithstanding the look of intense admiration with which

her movements were watched by the stranger, and the air of respect with which he seemed to listen for her most trivial observations, she could not fully realise her own intention of appearing cheerful and unembarrassed.

"Lady Rawleigh seems indisposed this morning!" inquired their Hampton acquaintance of Lord Calder, in a low voice.

"The fatigues and exposure of London dissipation," answered he, affecting the mere interest of common politeness in the subject, "seldom allow us the enjoyment of beholding beauty in the full measure of its mischief."

"And yet," said the stranger, with an air of very uncommon interest, "methinks the possessor of such a jewel might be excused for guarding it from harm,—whether physical or moral,—by very rigid guardianship. A woman so lovely in person and disposition, is too rare a treasure to be resigned to the risk—"

"Of taking cold on quitting a crowded ball-room," interrupted Lord Calder, willing for many reasons to curtail the unseasonable comments of Penruddock; and he immediately turned away to examine a cartoon which Sir Thomas had just drawn from one of his valuable portfolios, in elucidation of some point in dispute between himself and his fair companions.

There was something in the sensibility felt or affected by the stranger in speaking of Lady Rawleigh, sadly discordant to his own feelings; and he began to think him a much less polished and agreeable man than he had done ten minutes before. What was the wife of Sir Brooke to him, that he should presume to discuss the merits of her character, or the attractions of her person?—It was an unbecoming and presumptuous familiarity,—a remarkable proof of ill-breeding.—Such is usually the tenacity of the unprivileged and illegitimate adorer! The father, the brother, and the husband, are gratified by the homage rendered to the object of their hal-lowed affection; while the illicit lover regards every admirer as a rival,—every approving smile as intended to support pretensions as groundless and condemnable as his own.

It was probably this change of feeling towards his unknown companion, which now induced Lord Calder to mark by his apologies to their accomplished host for their intrusion on his valuable time, that he considered their visit to have exceeded its privilege of extent; and Frederica, delighted at the prospect of release, and scarcely conscious whether they had been inspecting a cabinet of natural history, or a gallery

of pictures, hastened to take a courteous leave of the party. It was evidently the intention both of the stranger and of Lord Calder to attend her to her carriage; but while the former by his more active agility contrived to keep pace with her animated movements, his lordship lost in a fruitless attempt, the occasion he had premeditated of inquiring from Sir Thomas Lawrence the name of his unexpected rival. Nor had Mrs. Erskyne been more active on this head; from the moment she discovered that Frederica and not herself was the object of the stranger's assiduities, she became perfectly indifferent whether he should prove the Cham of Tartary or Dr. Francia; even had she been more interested in the mystery, she could with difficulty have withdrawn her attention from the unceasing flow of graceful and lively conversation with which the president devoted himself to the entertainment of visitors approaching him under the introduction of Lord Calder.

But tedious as had been to Lady Rawleigh the task of dissimulation among her fashionable friends, importunate as the giddy whirl and animation of the crowded streets appeared on her return homewards, a far more serious trial awaited her equanimity on her arrival.

It was Saturday,—ex-official Saturday;

When Houses pause that Senators may dine;

and Sir Brooke, to whom a peremptory occupation was so novel a restraint, had determined to taste the first fruits of his holiday in company with a jovial crew to enhance the sweets of liberty. In the course of the morning he had invited Lord Launceston, Sir Robert Morse, Mr. Fieldham, Colonel Rhyse, and Sir Mark Milman to dine with him in Bruton-street; and Frederica, with all her oppression of spirit and struggling tears, now found herself required to play the courteous hostess, at the forfeiture of being taxed with churlishness towards her husband's guests. She might quit them early indeed on pretext of the Opera; and even that alternative presented a miserable prospect to her aching head and heart. But what else remained to be done?—If she decided on finishing the evening with Mrs. Deranzy, she knew she must endure fifteen editions of the unwelcome narrative of Rawleigh's infidelity;—if she determined on visiting her mother, she must be humiliated by contact with the partner of his guilt.

Nor with all her self-governance and all her exertions,

could she succeed in disguising her indisposition from the scrutiny of her visitors. She was loaded with importunate sympathy, sickened with the suggestion of nostrums; and so much was said to her touching the horrors of her aspect, in the tedious half-hour preceding the announcement of dinner, that could she have banished from her thoughts her fatal visit to Queen-Anne-street, she might have been tempted to apprehend fatal effects from her chain of connexion through Lady Olivia Tadcaster with the infected cabin of Captain Mopsley of the Scarmouth Castle!

"So you have been at Lawrence's this morning?" inquired Lord Launceston of his sister, soon after they were seated at table.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Rawleigh. "You never told me of that visit, Frederica;—are you going to sit for another picture?"

"Not at present," said Lady Rawleigh, drily. "But how did *you* hear of it, William?—have you seen Louisa Erskyne?"

"No!—the birds of the air brought it to my chamber;—and even informed me that you were especially attended on the occasion by a mysterious gentleman in black, whom Mrs. Erskyne believes to be Satan, and whom Lord Calder supposes to be the author of Junius."

"And who *is* decidedly the most agreeable man I ever met," said Lady Rawleigh.

Every one at table was now clamorous to inquire the name of the lucky mortal meriting such an encomium; and Sir Brooke became still more anxious, when he discovered that the stranger was no other than the Hampton knight. But to the general demand Frederica could only reply in her former words, that he was the most agreeable person with whom she had ever been in company.

"I fancy your friends Lord Calder and Mrs. Erskyne are somewhat more fastidious," said Launceston with a sneer.

"No! they are even more enthusiastic in his favour than myself."

"And you do not even know the name of this dangerous divinity?" asked Sir Robert Morse.

"I have very little doubt," said Colonel Rhyse, with a demure smile, "that Lady Rawleigh's friend is Squire Rabisnab, the great Yankee carkilator, who I guess is now making a tour in England."

"Not if Lord Calder is any judge of high breeding;—he

considers the stranger one of the most polished men in London."

"Rabisnab is rather famous for his address," said Lord Launceston tauntingly, and trying to uphold his friend's opinion.

"Is your hero a tall dark man, with very white teeth, Lady Rawleigh?" inquired young Fieldham, who was on terms of less facetious familiarity than the rest of the party.

"Precisely!—perhaps you are acquainted with him?"—said Frederica eagerly, while Sir Brooke suspended his operations on the saddle of mutton to listen to the reply.

"It *must* be the new Lord Vardington;—he has been living on the continent ever since the peace of Amiens, being a Roman Catholic, and all that kind of thing; and now his cousin having broken his neck, he is come into twenty thousand a-year and an Irish viscounty and all that kind of thing, and intends to renounce his foreign connexions."

"Very strange!" said Sir Robert Morse. "A man of his rank living in emigration all the best years of his life.—Very mysterious!"

"Perhaps he is a Jesuit," observed Colonel Rhyse.

"Now my dear Rhyse,—now my good friend Morse," pleaded Sir Mark Milman, who had not hitherto taken his eyes off his fish, "what on earth can it signify to either of you who or what this unlucky man may happen to be?—If Lady Rawleigh has met with Lord Vardington, and is captivated by his agreeable conversation (Rawleigh, I'll trouble you for some mutton,) why should you insinuate a disparaging opinion touching his habits or character? Do leave people to themselves; and not amuse yourself with placing them against their will in a magic lantern, to be danded up and down like the devil and the baker, for the idle diversion of your own leisure."

"My dear Frederica, you see Mrs. Erskyne was right!" said Launceston provokingly. "Sir Mark Milman assures us that your gentleman in black was, after all, neither more nor less than the devil."

"I said no such thing!" cried Sir Mark, with his mouth full of salad.

"At what hour on Tuesday are we to find our way to Lady Olivia Tadcaster's?" asked Sir Robert Morse of Lady Rawleigh, in order to change the conversation.

"Frederica sleeps there on Monday night," answered Sir Brooke, with a similar intention. "Lady Olivia will not allow *her* to escape even the overture."

"No!" said Lady Rawleigh, attempting to assume an air of nonchalance. "I have altered my mind;—I cannot determine myself to lose three days of London in the height of the season for this stupid fête. I have sent my excuses by to-day's post."

"Indeed!" cried her astonished husband. "Your resolution has been very suddenly taken. At breakfast you seemed to anticipate much amusement from the project."

"I fear, my dearest Fred.," cried Lord Launceston, setting down his untasted glass of champagne, "I very much fear you have been bewitched by the gentleman in black."

"It is very unkind to Lady Olivia to *announce* your intention of absenting yourself," said Mr. Fieldham; "you will spoil her party."

"I trust Lady Rawleigh will change her intention," observed Sir Brooke, with some solemnity.

"No, indeed!" said Frederica with a heightened complexion. "My mind is quite made up not to go into Essex."

"Then you will disoblige your aunt as well as me."

"Do you submit to threats, Lady Rawleigh?" exclaimed Colonel Rhyse, laughing. "Sir Brooke I was going to ask to take wine with you;—but you look so grave that all my conviviality is at fault."

"Nay!" said Rawleigh, vexed that this conjugal difference of opinion should have occurred in presence of so many witnesses, "my grave looks are an additional argument in favour of more champagne. Launceston, Morse, pray join us."

But in spite of his attempts to be sociable, he could not completely recover himself while Frederica remained at table. To hear her pronounce so strange and resolute a determination, appeared to him the most inexplicable thing in the world. Lady Olivia Tadcaster's entertainment, although in reality devised to obliterate the recollection of her Czartobolozkna misfortunes, was ostensibly given in honour of Lady Rawleigh; who had appeared to enjoy the prospect of a fête where all her family and friends would be assembled, and in the arrangements of which her taste had been materially consulted. Was Lord Launceston's random supposition just?—Had the attractions of her new friend sufficed to determine her stay in town;—or could she not, for three short days, absent herself from the adulation of Lord Calder?

As he heard the carriage drive from the door which conveyed his wife to the Opera, where he feared she would be gratified with the presence of one or both her favourites, poor Sir Brooke had very little spirit to recommend his claret, or



enter into the lively conversation of Rhyse and his brother-in-law; and while Lady Rawleigh was informing Mrs. Erskyne with an air of affected interest that she had discovered their Hampton friend to be no other than Lord Vardington, a newly inheriting Roman Catholic Viscount,—her lord and master was tranquillizing his apprehensions by a secret vow that to Essex she should positively go, if his own authority and the influence of her mother and brother were worthy of consideration.



## CHAPTER XXI.

Yet even her carriage is as far from coyness  
 As from immodesty :—in play, in dancing,  
 In suffering courtship, in requiting kindness,  
 In use of places, hours, and companies,  
 Free as the sun, and nothing more corrupted,

CHAPMAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Rawleigh's disinclination to breathe in the same room with Miss Elbany, she did not suffer herself to be detained from her accustomed visit to Lady Launceston after church on the following day; and having seated herself on her footstool beside her mother's sofa, who fancied she had been very busy reading one of Sherlock's sermons, and marked down the page as diligently as if she had really given her mind to the contents, Frederica forgot for a moment those uneasy feelings which were subdued by her recent act of devotion and present tenderness of enjoyment. The Companion was occupied in her own apartment; and for a wonder, Lady Launceston expressed no anxiety touching her absence.

After the news of the day, and an addition of two grains of soda instigated by Dr. Camomile in her ladyship's draughts had been gravely discussed, she suddenly exclaimed, "I grieve, my dear Frederica, to learn from your brother that you have possessed yourself with a whim to disappoint poor Olivia of your company on Tuesday next."

"I really do not feel equal to the exertion of the thing;—I was never aware till lately of the exhaustion and weariness arising from dissipation."

"My dear, you should see Dr. Camomile."

"No!—I intend to give myself the relaxation of a week's idleness,—a much better cure."

"But cannot you postpone it till after my sister's party? She will take it as a serious offence; and I must own, my dear Fred., that *my* feelings will be hurt by your indifference to her wishes."

"Nay, my dear mamma, if *you* make a point of my going to Ash Bank, I will not hesitate to recall my apologies."

"You see, love, Sir Brooke has been with me this morning to beg my interference. He will not hear of your staying away."

"Oh! Sir Brooke has been prompting you to influence me on this subject?" exclaimed poor Frederica,—the quilled ruff of her chemisette vibrating with emotion. "Then I certainly will *not* go."

Lady Launceston was quite amazed by the unusual tone of obstinacy assumed by her daughter. "My dear Fred., you forget yourself," said she, smiling; "you cannot wish to displease your husband for such a trifle?"

"Certainly not,—certainly not!—It is a *mere* trifle that Rawleigh should exert his tyranny to get me out of the way, in order that he may follow his own disreputable pursuits during my absence," said poor Frederica, vexed beyond her self-possession.

"What are you talking about," cried her mother, more startled than if her salts' bottle had broken in her hand. "Rawleigh a tyrant! Rawleigh guilty of a bad action!—My dear Frederica, I do not know you this morning."

"I wish I did not know myself!" cried her daughter, bursting into tears, "for I see nothing but misery awaiting me on every side."

"Fie! child—fie!—prosperous and fortunate as you are, it is tempting Providence to talk in this way. From the hour of your birth till now, my Frederica, you have never known misfortune; and your prospects are as bright as affection and affluence can make them. Thank God for them, my own dear girl,—as I do!—Go home and submit yourself to your husband's opinion; and do not, for a little irritation of temper, hazard an ungrateful feeling to heaven, or an ungracious action towards a man who adores you."

When poor sleepy Lady Launceston roused herself on any grand family emergency to give utterance to her opinions, it was remarkable by how much good sense and good feeling they seemed to be influenced. It was not, however, surprising to Frederica, who knew the excellence and integrity of her mother's principles; and who revered them the more that they were never brought forward for display on trivial occasions. She was at all times touched by the sound of her mother's voice, when employed in a tone of admonition or reproach; and in the present instance, although her tears were deprived of much of their petulant bitterness, they still flowed for having merited Lady Launceston's reproof.

"If you *desire* me, dear mamma, to go down to Ash Bank,"

said she at length, "I have never yet disobeyed you,—and I never will; but I shall fulfil my duty with an aching heart. Tell me, however, one thing;—has Miss Elbany received an invitation,—and will you resign her company and allow her to accept it?"

"Ah! my sweet love,—now indeed you are becoming rational,—*now* I recognise my own Frederica;—you feel that Lucy's society on the occasion would make even the Ash Bank fête delightful, and you do her no more than justice."

"But will you permit her to join the party?" persisted Lady Rawleigh, surprised but satisfied that her mother should so completely misinterpret her feelings.

"I wish it were in my power to oblige you. But Lucy was expressing last night her very decided resolution to excuse herself, as she is just now sitting for a miniature to ornament my dressing-room."

"You yield to *her* objections then, while you consider my inclinations concerning this tiresome party as of no importance!" said Frederica, mortified by the intelligence that the little portrait of herself, which had been recently finished, would find in its destination so unwelcome a companion.

"My dear,—the cases are wholly different!—my poor humble Lucy will not be missed from the gay throng, which you well know is to be collected in *your* honour. Besides, your husband insists on your going, and you have no right to disoblige him."

"Does he insist?"

"He will not hear of an excuse."

"Then," said Frederica, rising from her stool with an air of offended dignity, which only too well became the beauty of her person, "I will not venture to disappoint him. Let Rawleigh enjoy his triumph—it will not do him half so much honour as *my* submission."

And having kissed and taken leave of her mother, she quitted the house; but not without whispering to herself as she passed the threshold, that had she been aware of half the wickedness concentrated within the heart of man,—half the afflictions included in the chequered fortunes of the marriage state, she would never have resigned either the solace of her mother's affection, or the uneventful tranquillity of her mother's dwelling, to the usurpation of a Miss Lucy Elbany.

On her return home she found Mr. Lexley seated with her husband on the drawing-room sofa,—beating time on its damask cushions to the measured periods of political eloquence with which he was stultifying the faculties of Sir

Brooke previous to a regular attack on his vote,—as assassins commence their operations with narcotics ere they venture on the stiletto: while her brother, in expectation of her return, was amusing himself with making pen-and-ink sketches of coaches and four in her blotting-book. All three rose on her entrance; and Sir Brooke slyly directed a scrutinizing glance under her bonnet, to ascertain whether the atmosphere of St. George's church, and the arguments of the Dean of Carlisle, had effected any change in those stubborn feelings, in that levity of demeanour, which had sealed her lips on her return from the Opera the preceding night, but kept them in a ceaseless exercise of repartee and mirth during the whole of the ballet. On this point she did not seem inclined to prolong his suspense; for before Mr. Lexley could again possess himself of the button and the ear of his intended victim—before she had even accepted the chair rolled forward for her by her brother, she observed, “I find from mamma, Sir Brooke, that she is anxious I should not disappoint Lady Olivia on Tuesday next;—I have therefore determined to revoke my excuse, and go down to Ash Bank to-morrow according to my original intention.”

“I am delighted to hear it,—you have decided very properly!” burst from her brother and husband at the same moment.

“Perhaps I might be able to get away myself for a few hours!” hesitated Sir Brocke,—with an inquiring look toward Mr. Lexley.

“My dear Sir!—you do not think of such a thing,—the great Distillery Bill!—”

“Oh! very true!—Lady Rawleigh can do very well without me;—and I shall therefore be glad of a plea for staying away.”

“Perhaps, as you will not be able to use Mameluke for two or three days to come, you would not object to lend him to Miss Elbany during your absence? I have obtained my mother's acquiescence to the plan,” said her brother, continuing his sketches.

“Arrange it all among you,—I have no wishes, no opinions, no objections; and if I had, Heaven knows they would be little regarded,” said Frederica, throwing herself listlessly in her chair, as she thought of the companion lounging on her favourite Mameluke among the green lanes at Willesden, —with Launceston's sweet looks on one side, and Rawleigh's sweet words on the other,—while she was pining away her hours at Lady Olivia's villa.

"Then **you** have no scruple in disappointing Lady Olivia : you have made up your mind not to go to Ash Bank ?" she whispered to her brother.

"My dear Fred., I never distress myself by making up my mind. There are only three things to which the term 'making up' is ever applied by human creatures ; their minds,—their accounts,—and their medicines ;—three nauseous operations and quite out of my way."

"But you do not intend to join my aunt's party ?"

"Certainly not!—I detest the labour of villa entertainments ; more particularly where I must play the Janus part of guest and host at the same time. I oblige Lady Olivia Tadcaster very materially by leaving the arrangement of my affairs in her hands, and may therefore exonerate myself from the perils of her truffled turkies stuffed with Indian rubber, and her maraschino flavoured with prussic acid. Besides, she has thought proper to invite the Waddlestones, who will doubtless think proper to accept the invitation. All Spitalfields is already in a ferment with Mrs. W's. preparations."

"But surely if you love Leonora well enough to devote your future life to her society, you will not avoid her presence at a private *dejeuner* ?"

"Quite a different affair!—In transplanting Leonora to Marston Park, I shall take care to leave behind all the weeds with which my rose unique is surrounded ; but I have no nerve to exhibit myself to such people as your Lady Blanche Thorntons and your Lady Barbara Dynleys, in contact with a Mrs. Waddlestone, or a Mrs. Luttrell, or any other Hot-tentot of the tribe. I have not yet made my proposals ; and am not at present called upon to subject myself to such a humiliation."

"Not made your proposals ?—Surely then you are trifling unjustifiably with Leonora's affections ?"—

"Leonora and I understand each other."

"Only because she does not see you as I do, listening with entranced attention to the music or the conversation of mamma's companion ; sitting in that dull dressing-room, evening after evening, with no better amusement than winding silk, or copying mazurkas for Miss Lucy Elbany !"

"Don't talk of it,—Frederica, don't talk of it. It is too sweet a delusion to last ; let me enjoy my dream before it vanishes. But, by the way, I find my friend Mrs. Waddlestone has actually invited you to dinner, and—"

"That I have unhesitatingly declined her invitation."

"You have done right!—It was a specimen of presump-



tion worthy of herself, and arranged without the knowledge of her husband and daughter; who,—thank heaven,—very little resemble herself. *She*, you know, was born a Waddlestone and belonging to the firm; and being as wilful as heiresses generally are, insisted on marrying a clever young lawyer without a shilling and of tolerably good connexions, on whom her father eventually bestowed his daughter, his euphonious patronymic, and five hundred thousand pounds. I often think the soap-boiler-regnant's motive for marrying his daughter to a Lord, is to escape the perpetuation of the Waddlestone part of the business;—for the name is entailed with the bank-stock!"

"What a set!"

"You are quite right not to entangle yourself with such people. What would the French Ambassadress, and the Duchess of Whitehaven, and old Lady Wroxforth have said, had they met you at dinner at Waddlestone House; knowing how much the wife of a Warwickshire Baronet must be compromised by such a condescension."

Before Lady Rawleigh could reply to her brother's taunt, the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Erskyne made her appearance, followed by Lady Huntingfield, and Lady Margaret Fieldham, whose carriage had driven up at the same moment.

The object of the three ladies was pretty nearly the same,—to beg for Lady Rawleigh's interposition to procure invitations to Lady Olivia's breakfast; Lady Huntingfield for herself, her son and daughter, Mrs. William Erskyne for Lord Calder, Lady Rochester, Lady Blanche Thornton, and Mr. Vaux. Frederica assented with readiness; nor was she sorry that her husband should be present to learn that his pertinacity in driving her out of town on this occasion, for the furtherance of his own amusements, was likely to procure her the society of a coterie so little to his taste as that of Lord Calder. "But alas!" thought Frederica, as she lent an unheeding ear to the tittle-tattle of Mrs. Erskyne; "I need not flatter myself that Rawleigh feels the slightest interest on the subject;—*that time is over!*"

There are few things more surprising or more diverting than the meanness exhibited in the great world of London, to procure admittance to entertainments of any unusual promise; the falsehoods that are told, the degradations that are courted—the paltry engines set in motion to propitiate some friend's friend of the giver of the fête. Lady Olivia Tadcaster was a person universally avoided, as a tiresome, rest-

less woman, bent on turning her friends and acquaintance to account ;—a personal blemish in a fashionable circle ; and one of those solitary sparrows who, being unconnected by close intimacies of her own, was sure to intrude herself between persons who had very little inclination for the interposition of a third presence. She belonged to nobody,—was a bore to everybody ;—and excepting when Lady A. or Lady B. had a place to find for a favourite servant, grown too troublesome to be kept in their own establishment,—or a tradesman to recommend whose failure must ensure the prompt payment of their own triennial bill, she was very rarely troubled by the visits or importunities of her fashionable acquaintance. Even when cards were first issued for the Ash Bank breakfast, they had been received with coldness or contempt. “What *can* that foolish old woman mean by giving a fête?” cried Lady A. “Who in the world will travel twelve miles to look at her mountebanks’ tricks?” exclaimed Lady B. ;—and all the idle loungers of society being satisfied that something better would present itself to afford them diversion on the appointed day, threw their cards of invitation into the fire, and dismissed Lady Olivia from their recollection.

But it happened to be one of those London seasons when agricultural distress, or the distress of the manufacturing classes, or some other national disaster which could not possibly produce a reaction on the pockets of the higher ranks for two years to come, was universally quoted as a motive for dismissing one out of three French cooks, and sending back Collinet and Musard to Paris, in ragged coats. Not a ball was to be heard of for love or credit ; the select coteries expanded not a single inch in compassion to the general desolation ; and even Almack’s—so brilliant when relieved by the variety of other entertainments, became branded with the fatal epithet of *toujours perdrix* when thus affording a sole and unchanging point of reunion. Mammās who had a numerous progeny of angels in white satin to dispose of, grew distracted ;—young gentlemen who had looked forward to the season to dance themselves into fashion and the dining-out line of business, sat desponding over their official desks, or retired to the re-perusal of their tailor’s bills, in their monotonous lodgings ;—it was all as dull as a rainy hay-time in a pastoral county !—

Under such circumstances, the Ash Bank entertainment soon rose to a premium ; and a few days of fine weather having brought the fashionable world into a rural mood, it was ad-



mitted that Lady Olivia's shrubberies were as precipitous to sweet sentiment as Kensington Gardens; and that, as her ladyship was a comeatable person, not rendered fastidious by the frequency and routine of her entertainments, every body would go and take every body,—that is, every “every body” privileged by their own standing in the world to take liberties. There seemed a probability that the despised Lady Olivia would assemble on this occasion all the select vestry of fashion, from whose meetings she was herself unanimously rejected.—But this is no unprecedented case!

Meanwhile Frederica, who had ceased to regard Lady Huntingfield as a well-meaning tiresome country-neighbour, and Lady Margaret as a pretty lack-a-daisical woman of four-and-thirty, whose matrimonial disappointments had arrested her progress in life among the sickly affectations of sweet eighteen, and now beheld them only as the fatal witnesses of her husband's indiscretion, could not but notice the measured formality with which they thought it their duty to reply to Sir Brooke Rawleigh's friendly attentions. The scene of his tender adieu to Miss Elbany appeared so wholly unimportant to his own feelings, that he had entirely forgotten Lady Huntingfield's intrusion, and air of indignant consternation; nor could he at all account for the ungracious primness with which she now received his attempts to relieve Lady Rawleigh in the entertainment of her numerous guests. But Frederica's memory was more tenacious,—her perception more acute; and ever and anon, in the midst of Louisa Erskyne's lively gossip with herself and Launceston, she cast a sidelong glance at the rectangularity of person and aridity of speech affected by the Fieldhams towards the knight of Rawleighford.

Mrs. Erskyne, in the interval, was exercising a similar degree of impertinence, although on very different grounds. She was not by nature a malicious woman. Like certain reptiles, her lips were venomous, and her intentions harmless; but she was intensely and so exclusively occupied with herself and her own pleasures, the business of her life was so completely that of amusing herself, that she would have estimated an earthquake, a hurricane, a revolution, or any other great national calamity, solely with reference to its influence on her personal vanities and diversions. She regarded the death of her relatives as an importunate occasion for wearing black, and depression of spirits as a disease demanding the seclusion of the mourner from all danger of infecting the rational part of the community; she was, in fact, a pretty



little useless butterfly, born to flutter its wings in the sunshine, and to disappear unmarked and unlamented on the approach of winter. To such a woman, her exclusion from Lord Calder's coterie—the best thing of its kind in London,—had been a subject of secret but bitter mortification; and the recent reversion of her sentence, a matter of equal exultation. She was too worldly-wise, however, not to detect the motive which had proved her passport to the forbidden circle; and having very little faith in Lady Rawleigh's blindness or indifference to his lordship's adoration, was only apprehensive that Frederica would prove as discerning as herself,—and either oppose her progress,—or reveal its origin to the world. Her great object, therefore, was to prove to Lady Rawleigh her own importance and influence in the coterie at Calder House.

"Then you will write to Lady Olivia for cards for Lady Rochester, Countess Rodenfels, and Lady Blanche!" said she, while the eyes of her desponding friend were wandering to the rigidity of Lady Huntingfield's person. "I would have asked your aunt myself, only I am tired to death with the exertions I have been using to persuade them all to go. You know how Calder hates a bore!—I have been obliged to promise him that Lady Olivia should not bestow more than ten minutes per hour of her tediousness upon him, during his stay at Ash Bank."

"But why trouble themselves to solicit an invitation at all?" said Launceston; who, however prone to utter impertinences respecting his aunt, was less patient of hearing them from the lips of others. "If they feel so *undesirous* of going, we feel them very *undesirable* additions to the party."

"Solicit!—the idea of Lady Rochester's soliciting the honour of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's acquaintance!"

"I have known her solicit—aye, and be refused the *entrée* to houses of less respectability, and of very little importance. When a woman like Lady Rochester is to be saved from sinking, she buoys herself up with cork and other light valueless substances."

Lady Rawleigh, vexed by her brother's bitterness, now turned the conversation by inquiring of Louisa whether Mr. Erskyne was satisfied with her miniature,—a transition which appeared likely to kindle dissensions in a new quarter; for the fair guest immediately turned round to Sir Brooke, who had been compelled by the dryness of the Huntingfields to resume his shop-colloquy with the button-holder.

"Oh! by-the-way," cried she, "I have undertaken, Sir

Brooke, to procure your consent to a measure calculated for the advantage of the world in general. My picture is in the act of being engraved for the series of female portraits of the nobility, and I have ventured to promise that my friend Frederica's shall grace the following number."

Now this proposition was in fact as new to Lady Rawleigh as to any person present; but the blush of surprise was mistaken by her husband for the expression of her confederacy in the business; and he no longer doubted that the picture which originally moved his jealousy, ~~ere he learnt its destination as~~ a present to Lady Launceston, had been in fact projected with a view to this dangerous multiplication.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, and the rest of Lady Rawleigh's friends," said he, with considerable emphasis on the word, "but I entertain the old-fashioned prejudice of wishing to retain the resemblance of my wife sacred from the comments of the crowd round a printseller's shop. Had I married an actress, I must have submitted to such a degrading publicity—but, as it is—you must excuse me."

"That I will, with pleasure," cried Louisa, rising hastily to take leave; "for I shall thus escape all invidious comparisons between her face and my own;—but with your opinions and principles, I wonder you ever allow her to overstep the avenue at Rawleighford. Good bye, Fred.;—I need not ask you whether I shall see you in the 'degrading publicity, of the park or gardens!'"

"Why not!—I shall certainly take a turn there late in the day," answered Lady Rawleigh, who had never ventured in these resorts on a Sunday in her life; but who was apprehensive her friend would proclaim her a poor, meek-spirited, tyrannized wife, unless she exerted a little unnatural show of independence. "Till then, good bye!—I will send you the tickets to-morrow."

"Mrs. Erskyne has charming spirits," said Lady Huntingfield, when she had quitted the room.

"Quite a little sparkling gem!" said Lady Margaret, languidly; and Frederica, who was aware of their detestation of the caustic Louisa, readily perceived that these commendations were intended as an offence to Sir Brooke, whose demeanour towards her had been so little gracious.

"A gem I should be sorry to wear!" cried Lord Launceston. "I should expect it would occasionally remind me of its possession by a severe prick,—like Prince Chéri's ring."

"Prince Chéri's ring," said Lady Huntingfield, assuming

a solemn air and tone, "was only metaphorical of conscience; a moral sensibility which appears lost to modern times."

But the innuendo was equally lost on poor Sir Brooke; who was now once more enveloped in all the fogs and mists of the Report of some recent Committee. Even the departure of his guests, of Lord Launceston, of Lady Rawleigh herself, failed to divert the even tenor of Lexley's prose,—the patient gravity of his victim's attitude of audience.

END OF VOL. I.

HS 15





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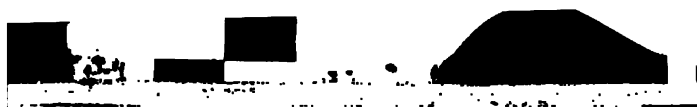
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